VISIONARIES

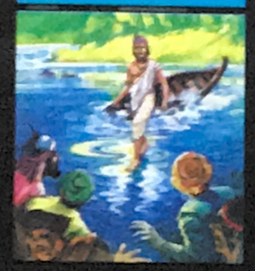
TANSEN

From imitating animal sounds to igniting a fire with his song – Tansen's genius was unmatched. His voice was so much in demand that wily patrons used it to gain political advantage. Such a talent could win loyal friends and a beautiful wife, but it could also make others viciously jealous. In Emperor Akbar's court, he was a jewel more precious than the diamonds and pearls that were showered on him, and he remains to this day a shining symbol of classical Indian music.

OTHER ACK VISIONARIES:

MIRABAI

KABIR



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TANSEN

THE MUSICAL GEM

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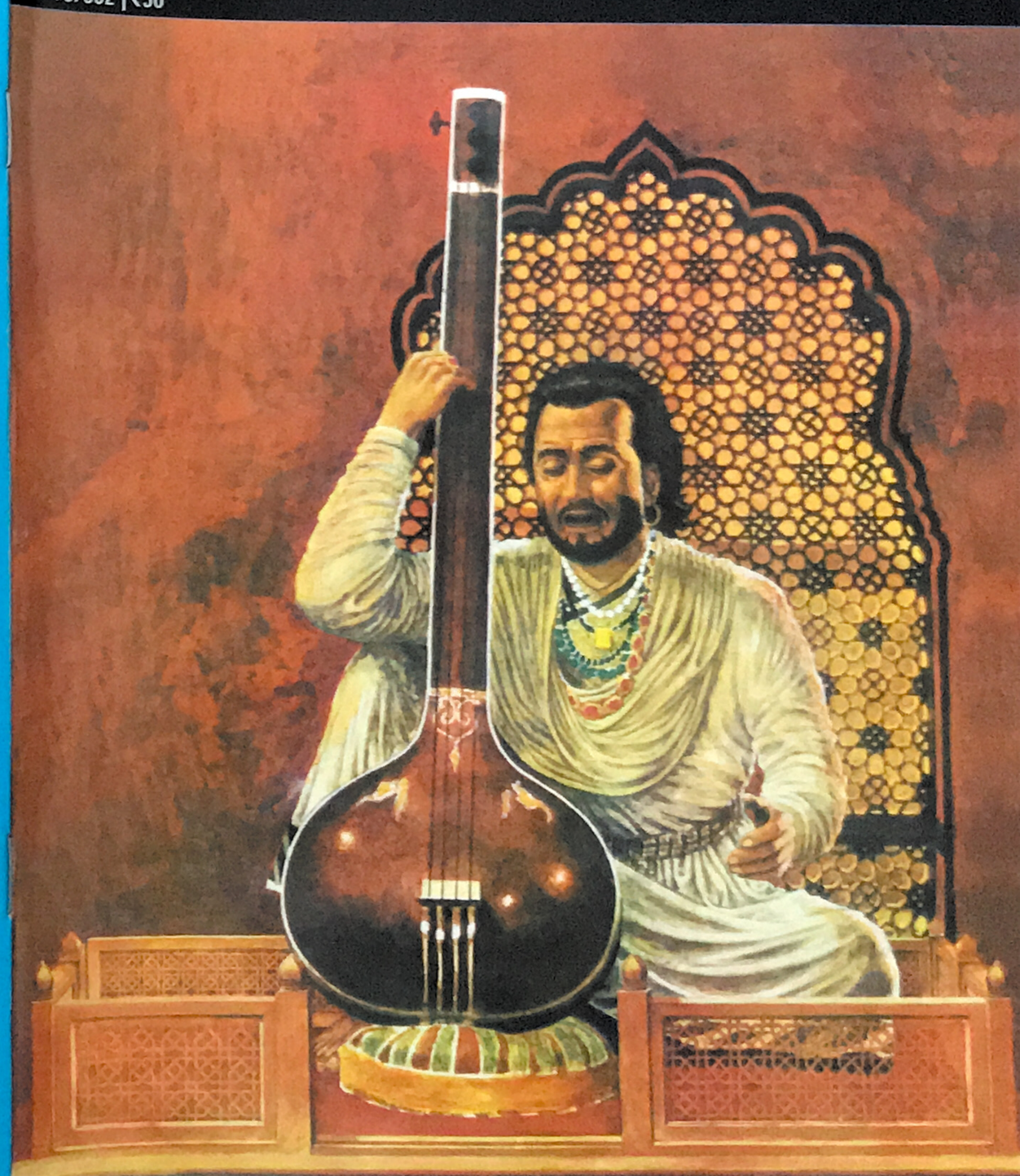
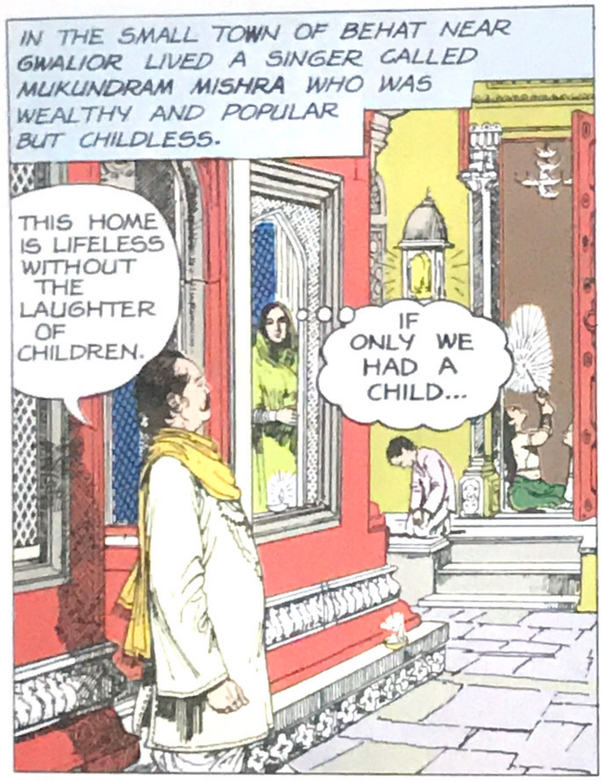
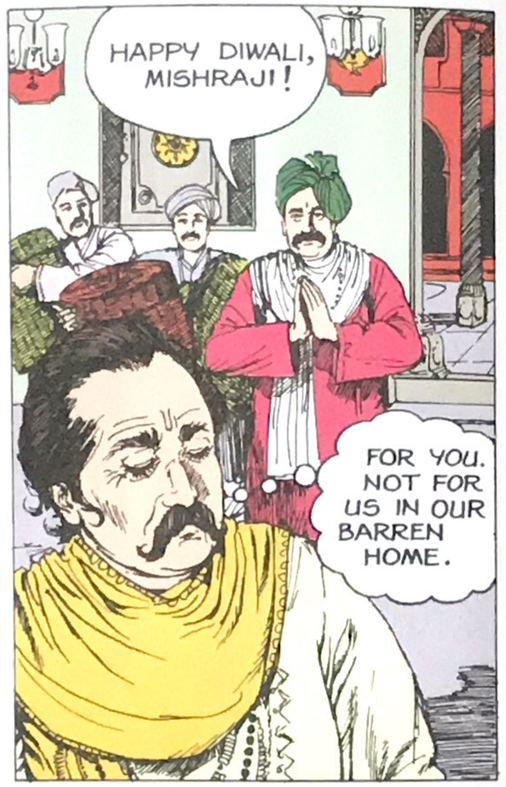


TANSEN

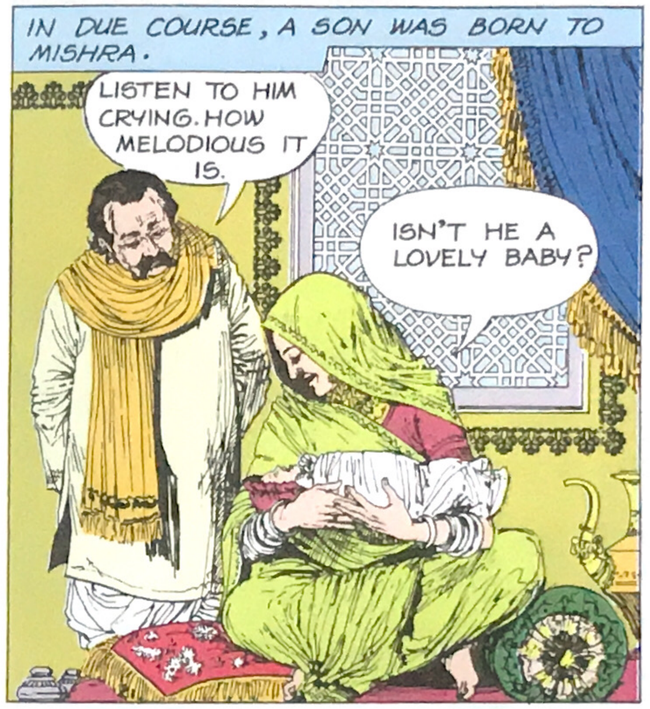
TANSEN IS ONE OF THE GREATEST MUSICIANS INDIA HAS PRODUCED. HIS CONTRIBUTION TO HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL MUSIC REMAINS MATCHLESS. HE FOUND AN ENCOURAGING PATRON IN AKBAR, THE GREAT MUGHAL EMPEROR.

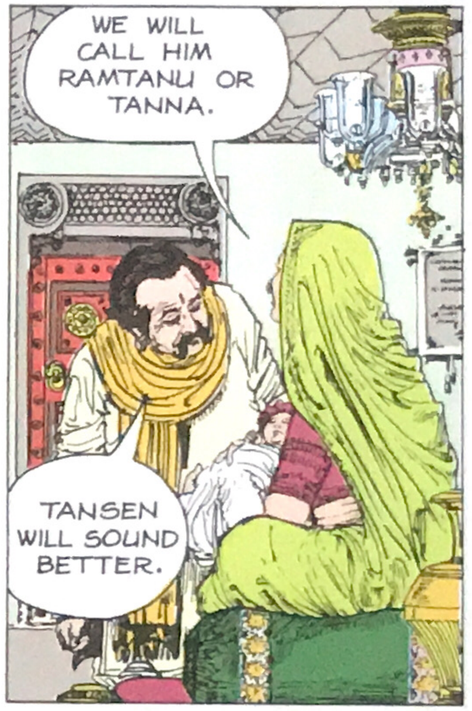

IN THE SMALL TOWN OF BEHAT NEAR GWALIOR LIVED A SINGER CALLED MUKUNDRAM MISHRA WHO WAS WEALTHY AND POPULAR BUT CHILDLESS.
THIS HOME IS LIFELESS WITHOUT THE LAUGHTER OF CHILDREN.
IF ONLY WE HAD A CHILD...

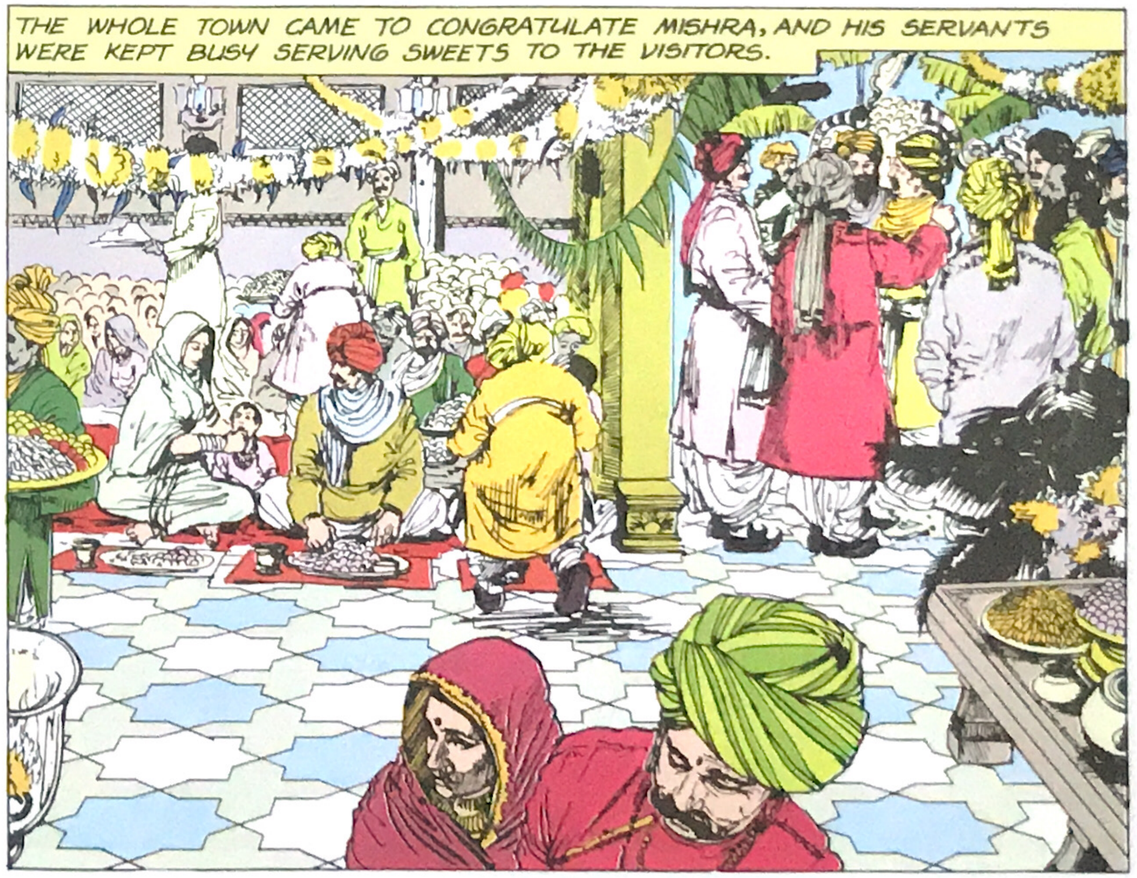

HAPPY DIWALI, MISHRAJI!
FOR YOU. NOT FOR US IN OUR BARREN HOME.

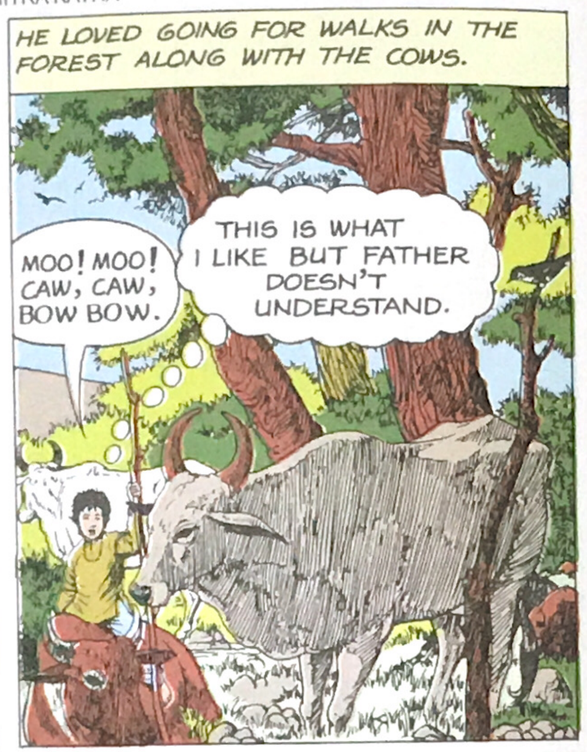
MISHRAJI, DON'T LOSE HOPE YET. WHY NOT GO TO MOHAMMED GAUS OF GWALIOR AND SEEK HIS BLESSINGS? MAYBE YOUR WISH WILL BE FULFILLED.

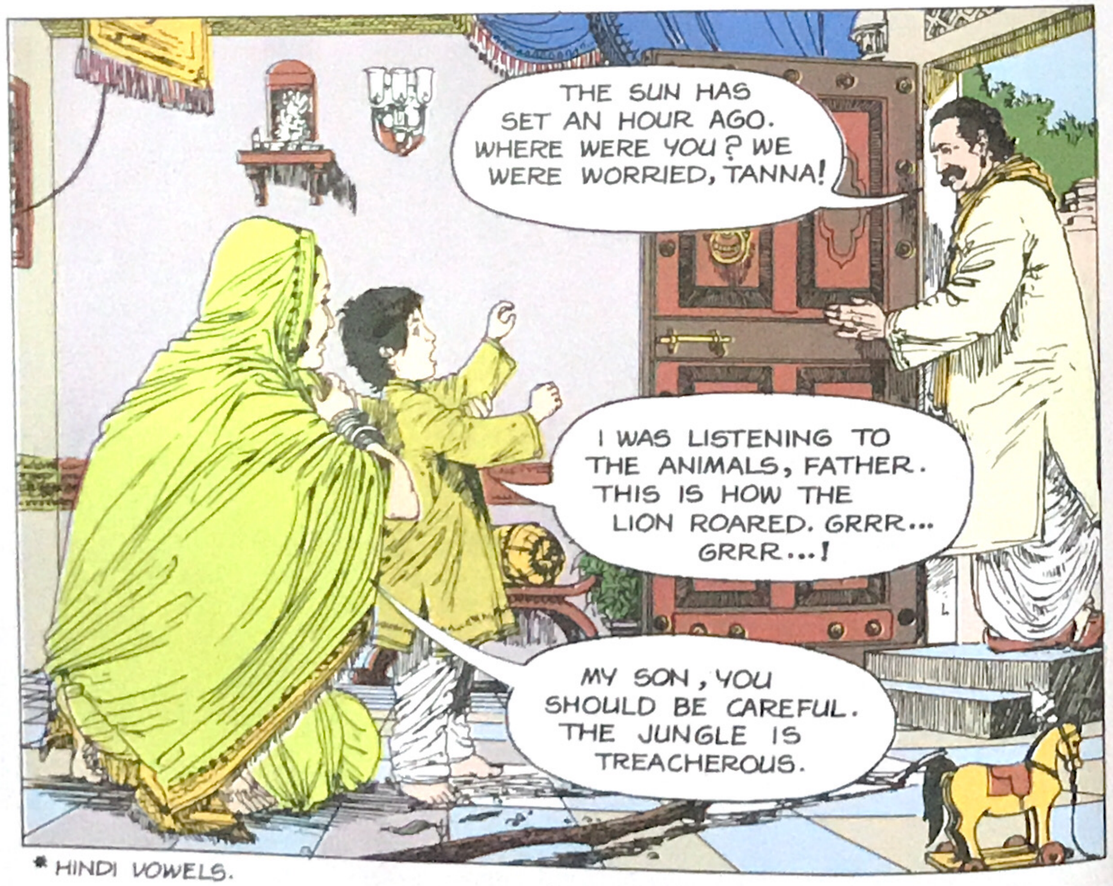
THE NEXT DAY MISHRA WAS AT THE FEET OF MOHAMMED GAUS.
TAKE THIS HOLY TALISMAN AND TIE IT ON YOUR WIFE'S ARM. YOU WILL HAVE A SON.


IN DUE COURSE, A SON WAS BORN TO MISHRA.
LISTEN TO HIM CRYING. HOW MELODIOUS IT IS.
ISN'T HE A LOVELY BABY?

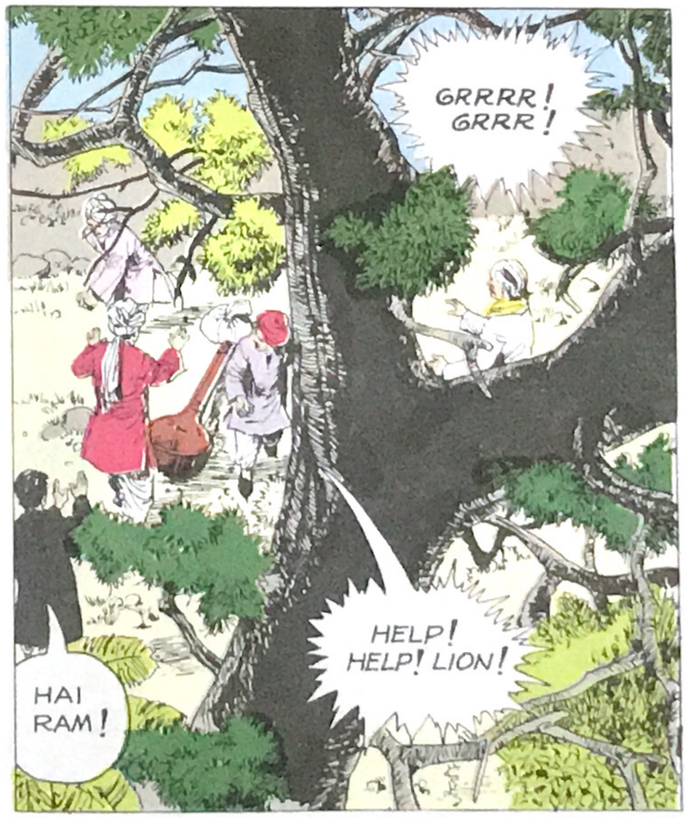

WE WILL CALL HIM RAMTANU OR TANNA.
TANSEN WILL SOUND BETTER.


THE WHOLE TOWN CAME TO CONGRATULATE MISHRA, AND HIS SERVANTS WERE KEPT BUSY SERVING SWEETS TO THE VISITORS.





* HINDI VOWELS.

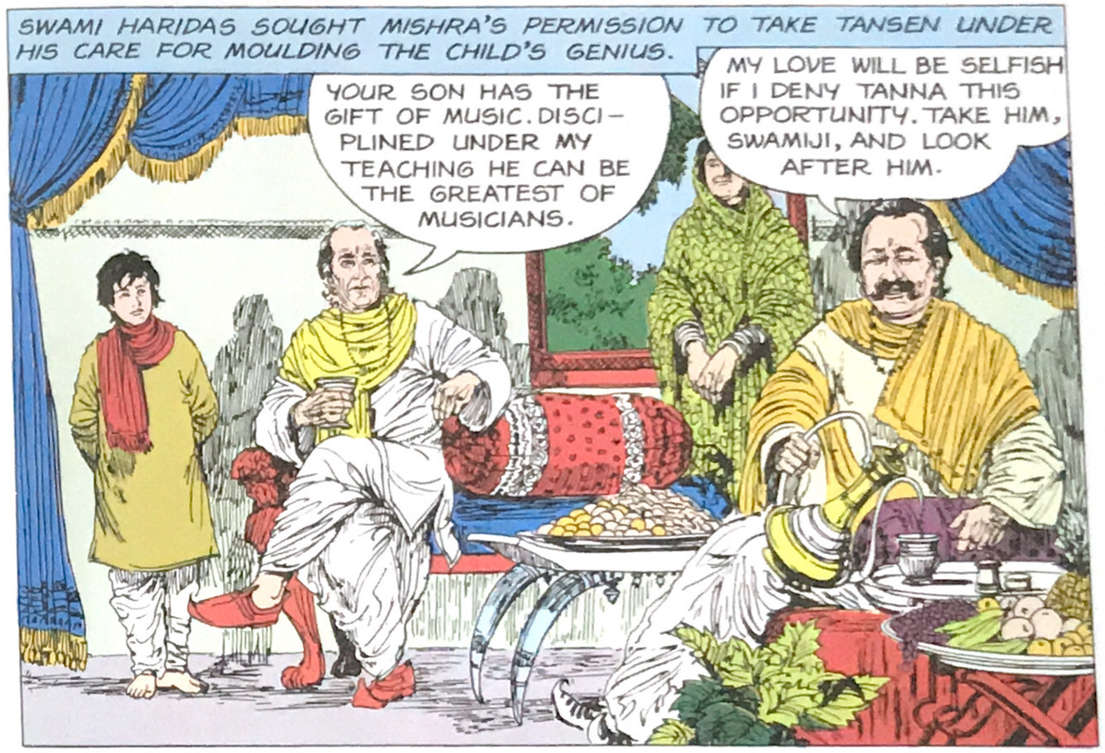


HERE IS OUR LION, SWAMIJI. I FOUND HIM BEHIND A TREE!

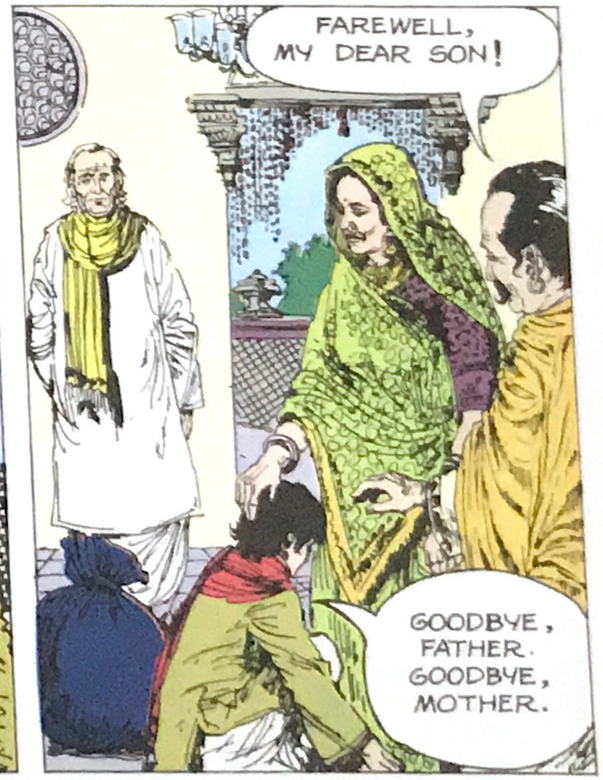
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
TANSEN!

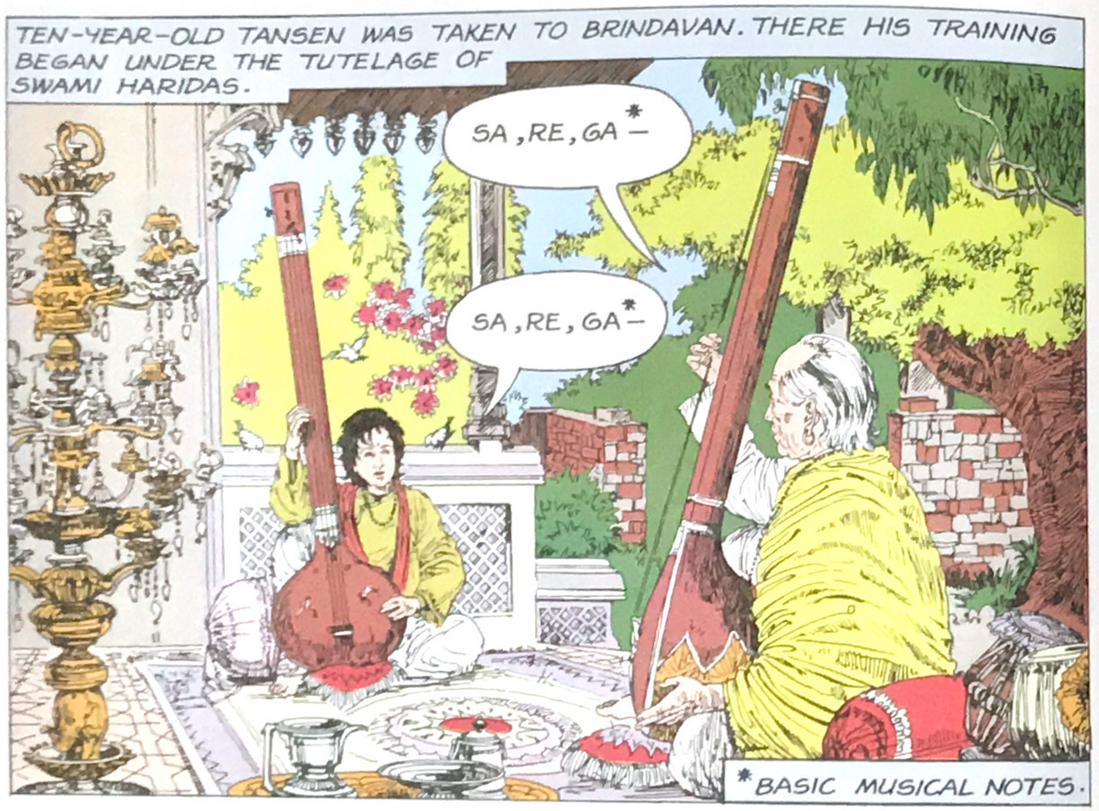
YOU IMITATED THE LION VERY WELL!
I CAN IMITATE ALL THE ANIMALS OF THE FOREST.

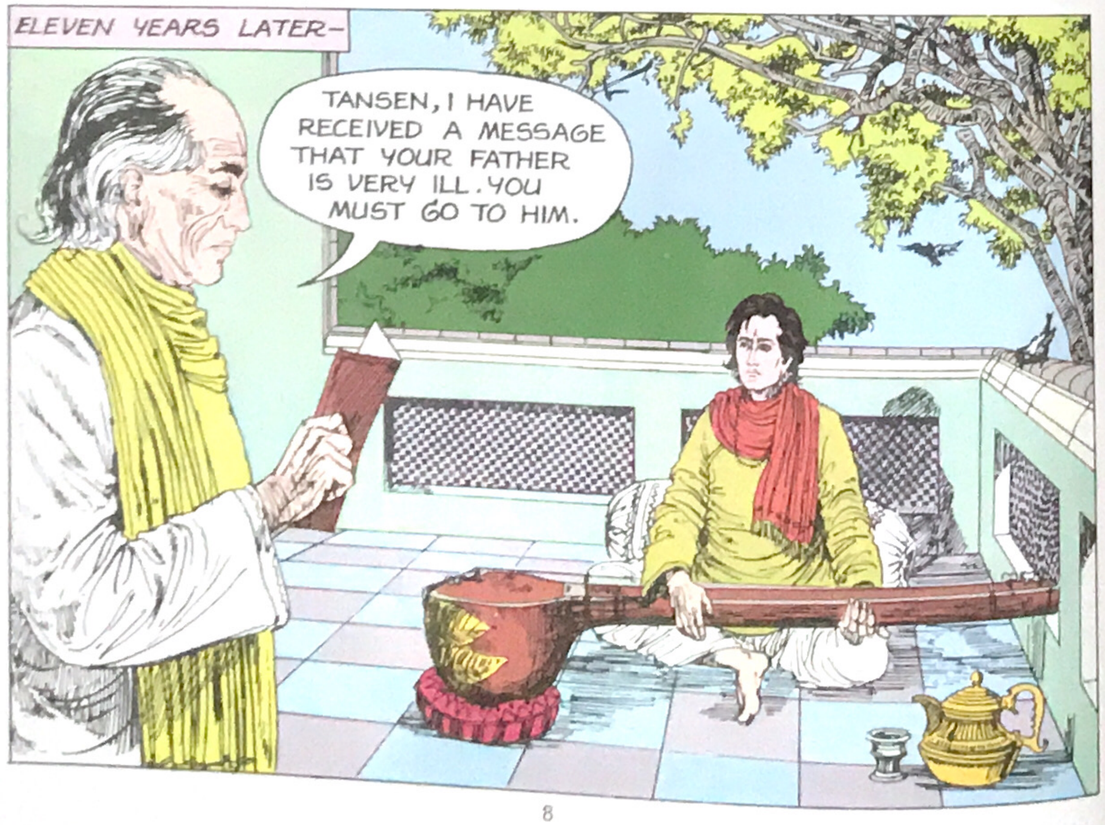
MISCHIEVOUS BOY. TALENTED TOO! HE COULD BECOME A GOOD SINGER IF HE WERE TAUGHT.
TAKE ME TO YOUR FATHER, TANSEN. I WANT TO MEET HIM.

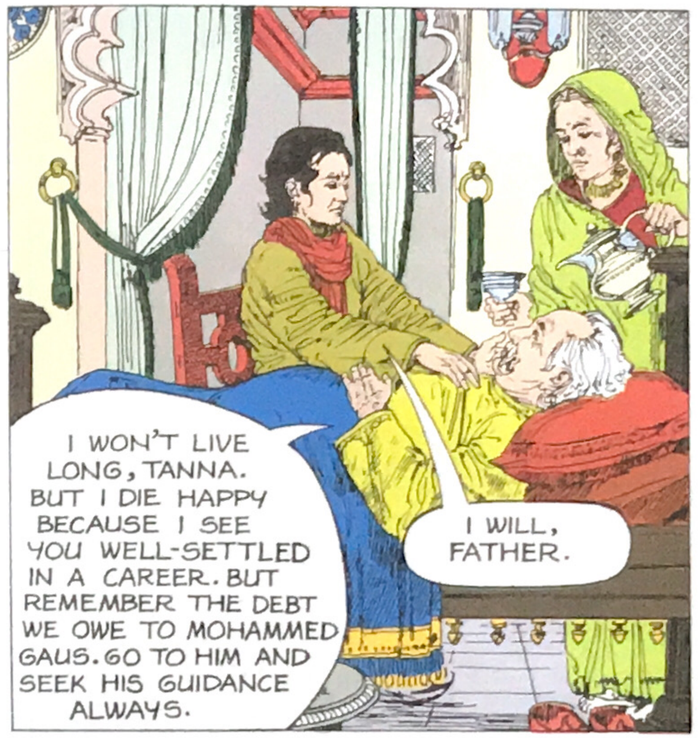

SWAMI HARIDAS SOUGHT MISHRA'S PERMISSION TO TAKE TANSEN UNDER HIS CARE FOR MOULDING THE CHILD'S GENIUS.
YOUR SON HAS THE GIFT OF MUSIC. DISCIPLINED UNDER MY TEACHING HE CAN BE THE GREATEST OF MUSICIANS.
MY LOVE WILL BE SELFISH IF I DENY TANNA THIS OPPORTUNITY. TAKE HIM, SWAMIJI, AND LOOK AFTER HIM.

TANNA, OBEY YOUR GURU AND DO AS HE BIDS YOU.


FAREWELL, MY DEAR SON!
GOODBYE, FATHER. GOODBYE, MOTHER.


TEN-YEAR-OLD TANSEN WAS TAKEN TO BRINDAVAN. THERE HIS TRAINING BEGAN UNDER THE TUTELAGE OF SWAMI HARIDAS.
SA, RE, GA*–
SA, RE, GA*–
*BASIC MUSICAL NOTES.

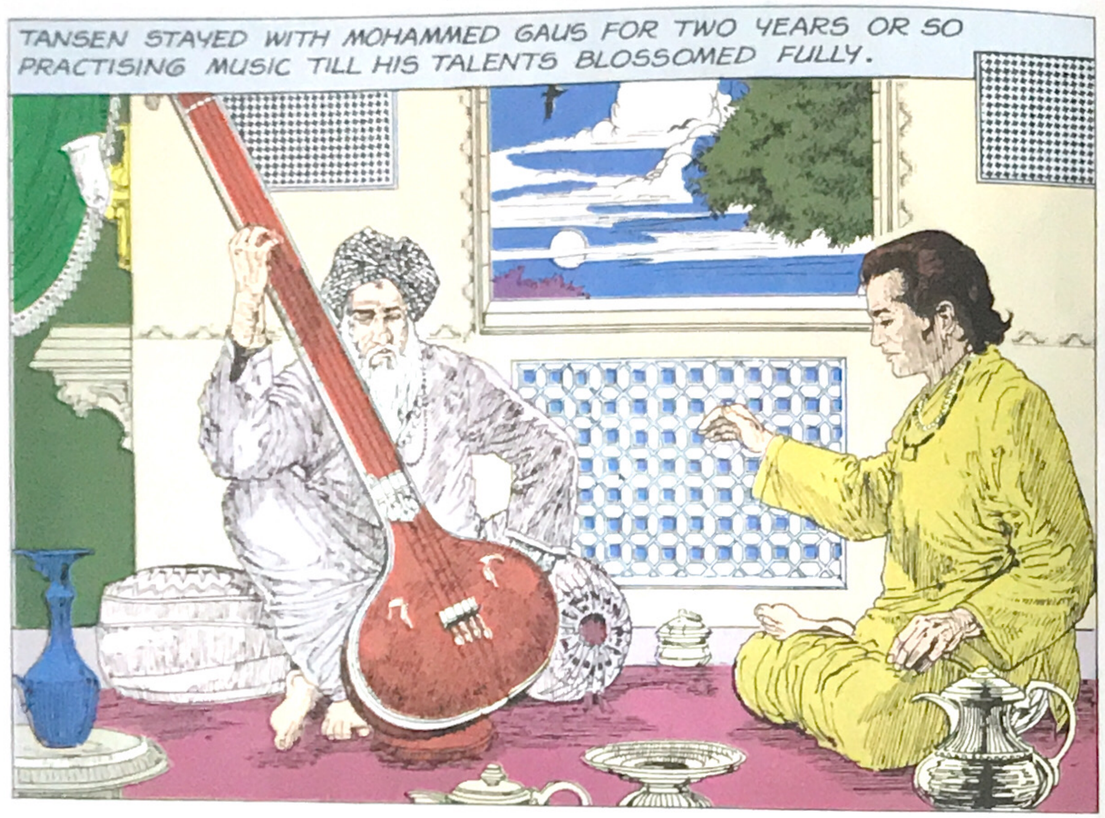

ELEVEN YEARS LATER–
TANSEN, I HAVE RECEIVED A MESSAGE THAT YOUR FATHER IS VERY ILL. YOU MUST GO TO HIM.


I WON'T LIVE LONG, TANNA. BUT I DIE HAPPY BECAUSE I SEE YOU WELL-SETTLED IN A CAREER. BUT REMEMBER THE DEBT WE OWE TO MOHAMMED GAUS. GO TO HIM AND SEEK HIS GUIDANCE ALWAYS.
I WILL, FATHER.

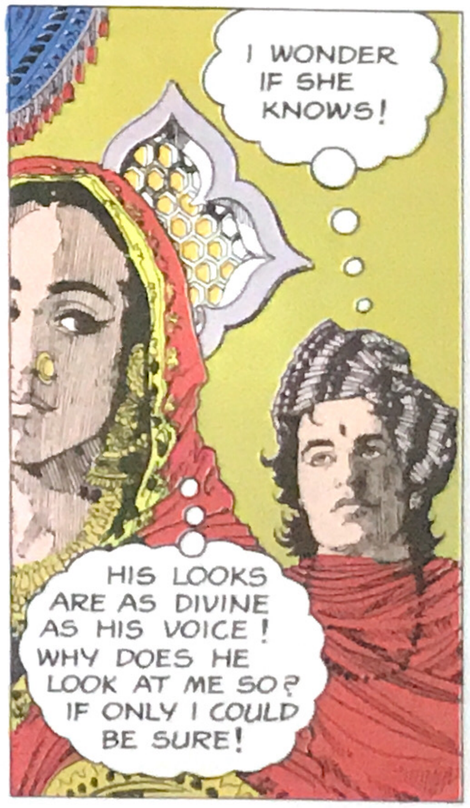
SOON AFTER HIS FATHER'S DEATH HIS MOTHER, TOO, DIED.

TANSEN HAD NO ONE NOW EXCEPT SWAMI HARIDAS AND MOHAMMED GAUS.
GOODBYE, HOME! GOODBYE MY FORESTS.

GURUJI, PLEASE PERMIT ME TO VISIT MOHAMMED GAUS. IT WAS MY FATHER'S LAST WISH THAT I SHOULD DO SO.
GO, TANSEN, BUT REMEMBER YOU ARE WELCOME TO RETURN ANY TIME.



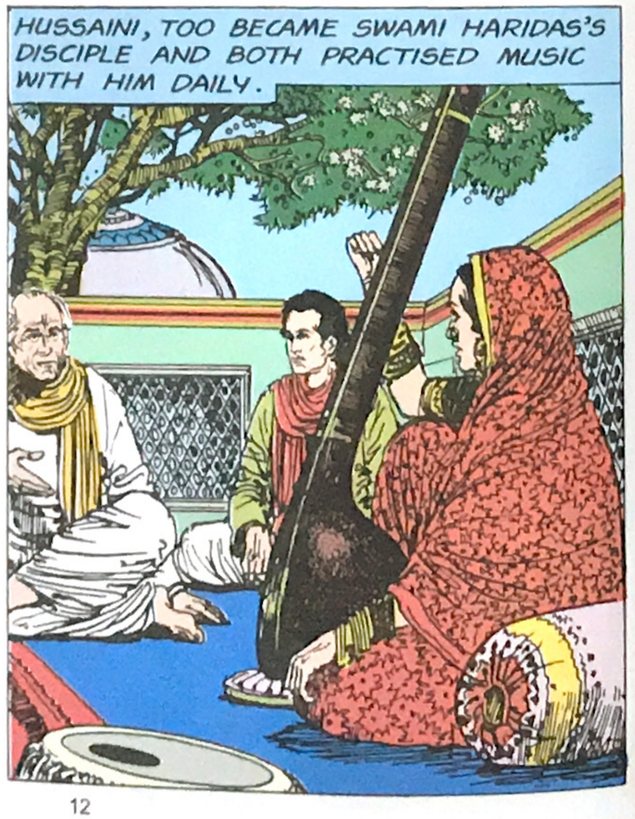
THE RANI WAS PLEASED WITH TANSEN AND THEY BECAME MUTUAL ADMIRERS. TANSEN OFTEN VISITED HER AND STAYED ON TO HEAR HER SING.



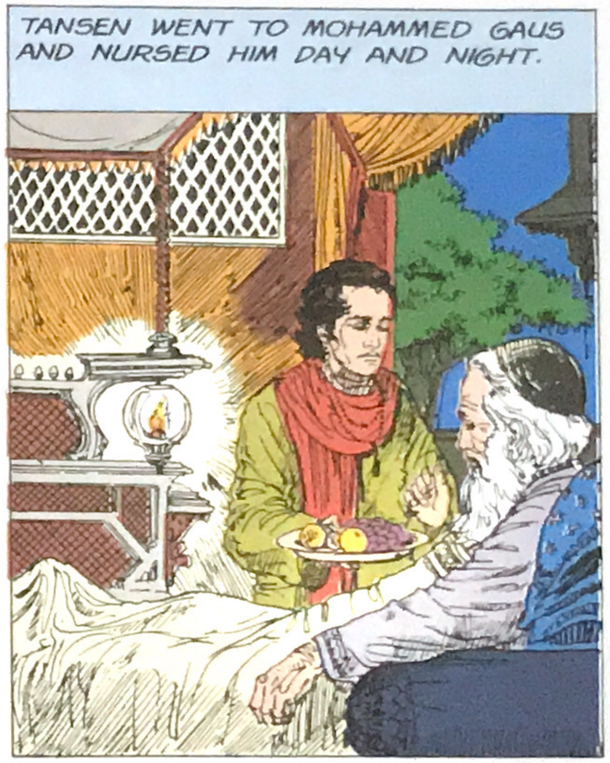
TANSEN PLEADED WITH MOHAMMED GAUS TO MARRY THEM. HE CHANGED HIS RELIGION, BECAME ATA ALI KHAN AND WAS WEDDED TO HUSSAINI.

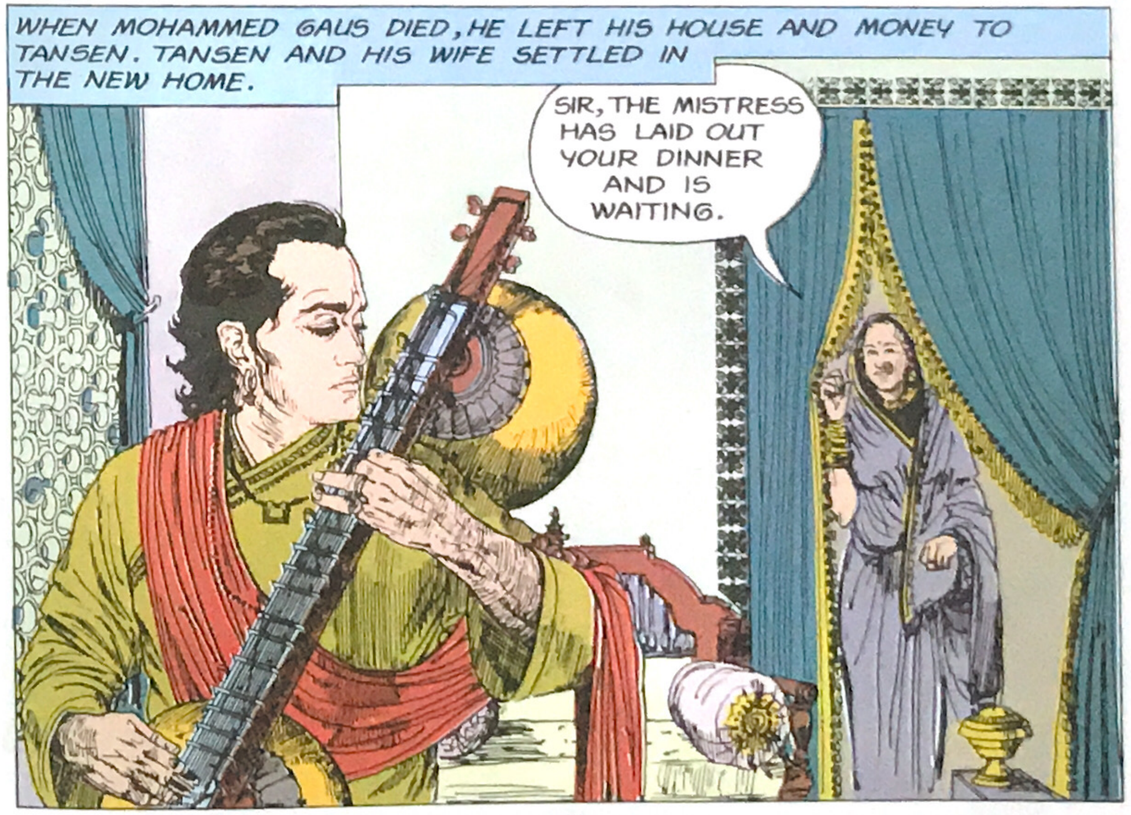
AFTER THE WEDDING—
I HAVEN'T SEEN GURUJI FOR YEARS. PLEASE PERMIT US TO GO AND SEEK HIS BLESSINGS—
YES, MY SON, YOU MAY GO.

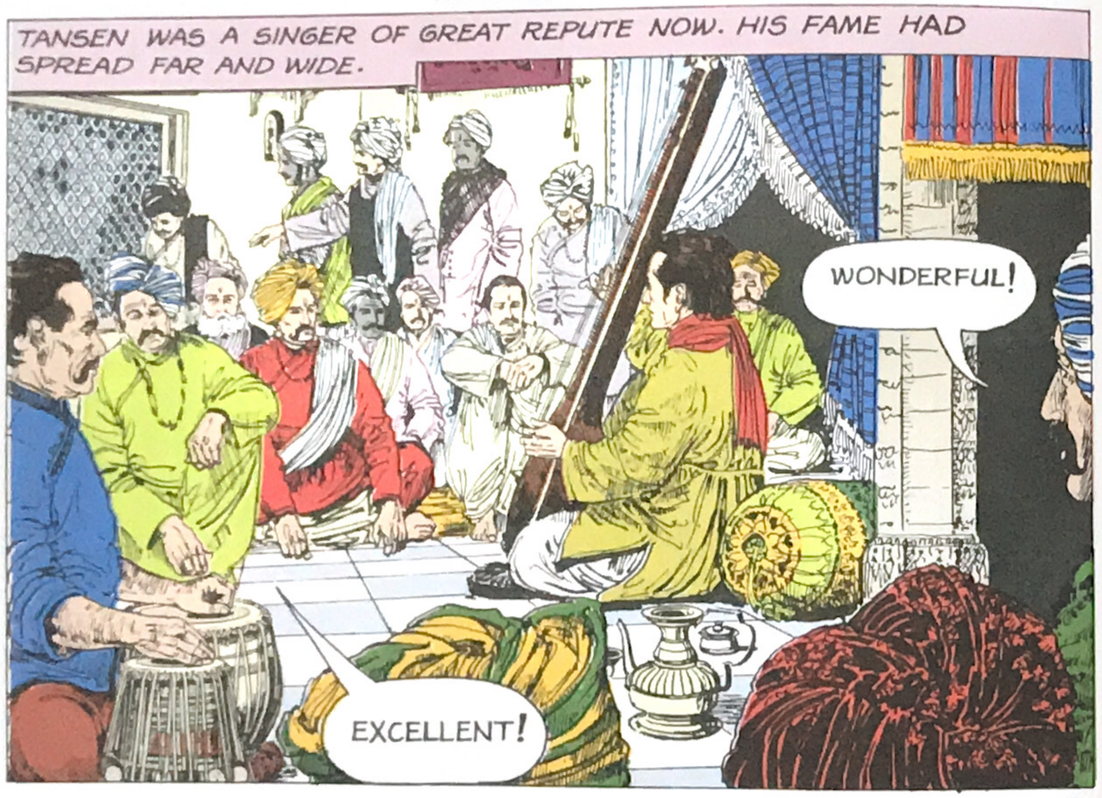
I AM HAPPY TO SEE YOU AGAIN, TANSEN. CONSIDER THIS YOUR OWN HOME. STAY AS LONG AS YOU LIKE.
GURUJI.

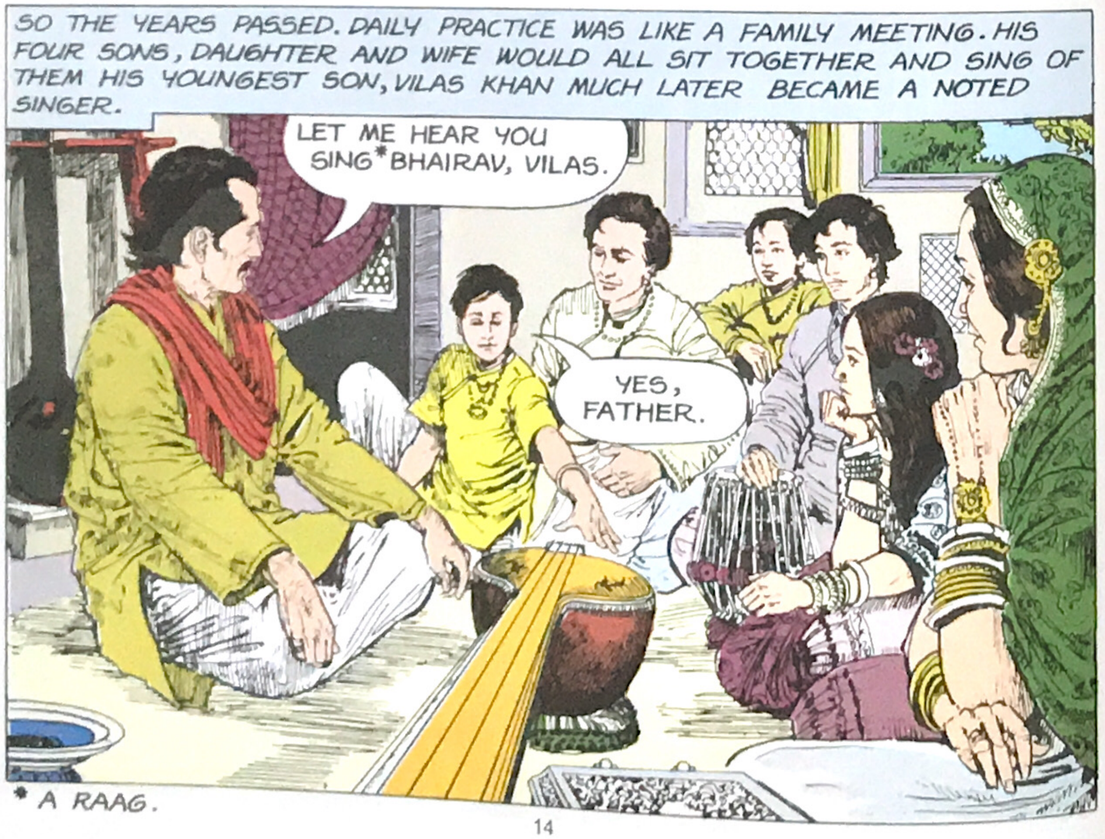

HUSSAINI, TOO BECAME SWAMI HARIDAS'S DISCIPLE AND BOTH PRACTISED MUSIC WITH HIM DAILY.

ONE DAY—
I AM ILL. MY LIFE IS COMING TO AN END. I WISH TO SEE YOU FOR THE LAST TIME.

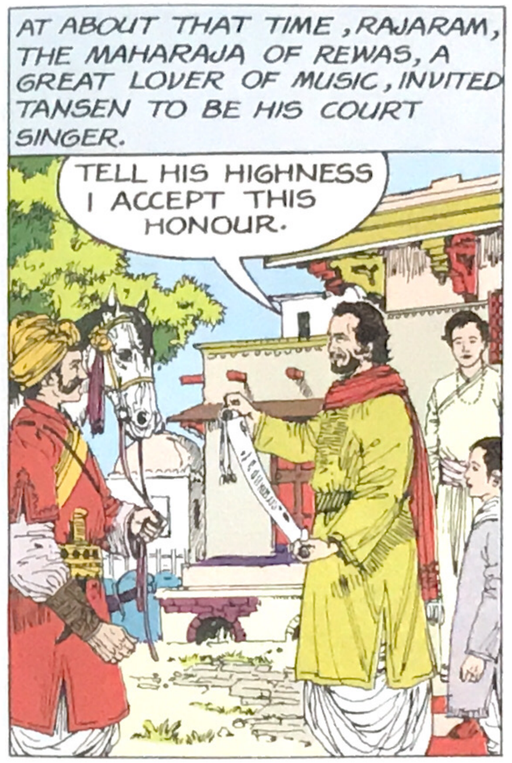

TANSEN WENT TO MOHAMMED GAUS AND NURSED HIM DAY AND NIGHT.


WHEN MOHAMMED GAUS DIED, HE LEFT HIS HOUSE AND MONEY TO TANSEN. TANSEN AND HIS WIFE SETTLED IN THE NEW HOME.
SIR, THE MISTRESS HAS LAID OUT YOUR DINNER AND IS WAITING.


TANSEN WAS A SINGER OF GREAT REPUTE NOW. HIS FAME HAD SPREAD FAR AND WIDE.
WONDERFUL!
EXCELLENT!


SO THE YEARS PASSED. DAILY PRACTICE WAS LIKE A FAMILY MEETING. HIS FOUR SONS, DAUGHTER AND WIFE WOULD ALL SIT TOGETHER AND SING OF THEM HIS YOUNGEST SON, VILAS KHAN MUCH LATER BECAME A NOTED SINGER.
LET ME HEAR YOU SING* BHAIRAV, VILAS.
YES, FATHER.

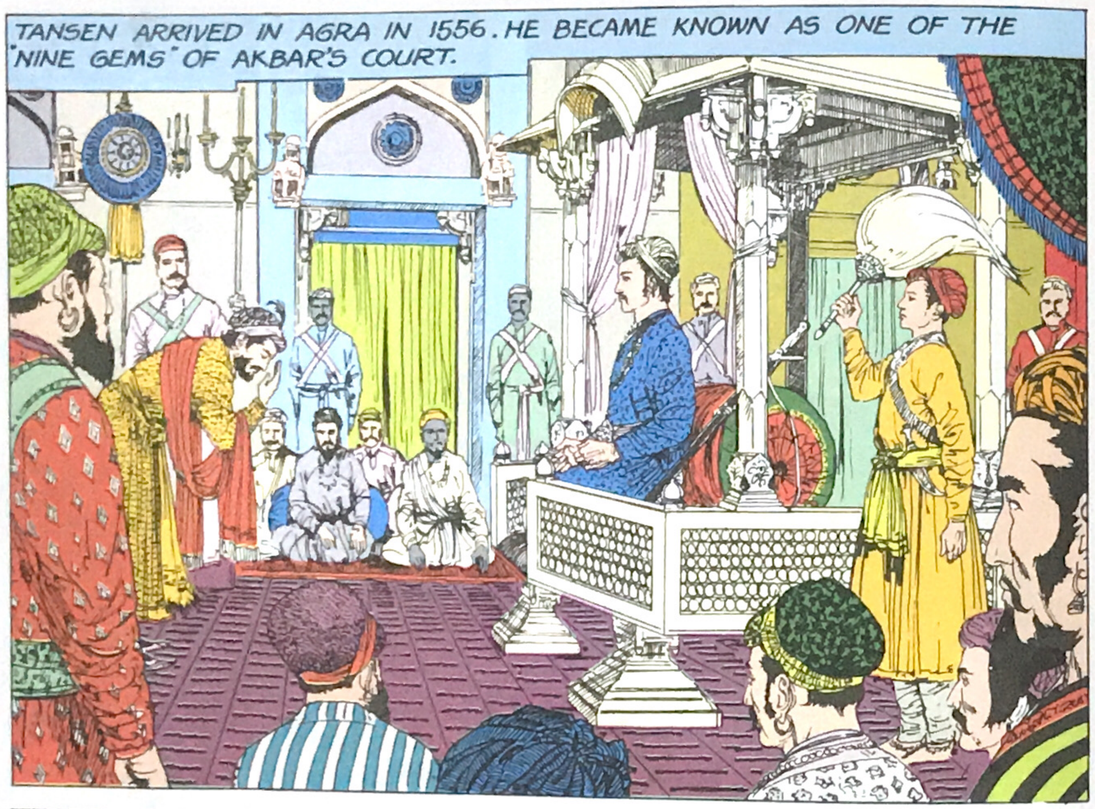
* A RAAG.

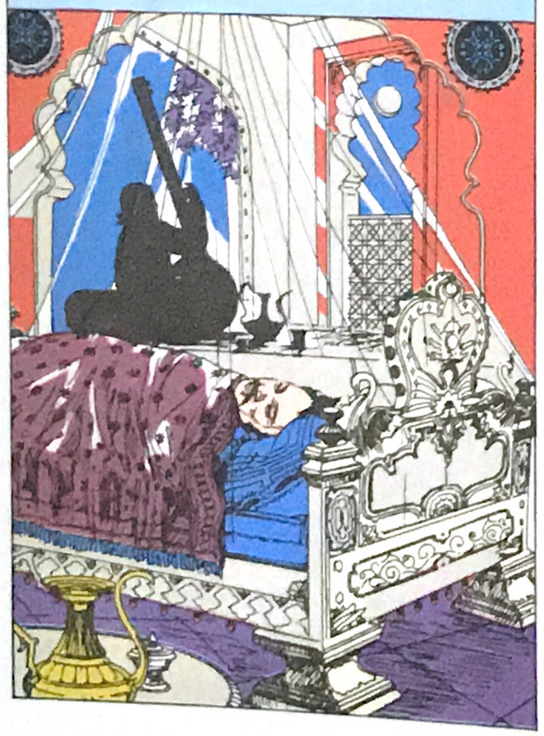

AT ABOUT THAT TIME, RAJARAM, THE MAHARAJA OF REWAS, A GREAT LOVER OF MUSIC, INVITED TANSEN TO BE HIS COURT SINGER.
TELL HIS HIGHNESS I ACCEPT THIS HONOUR.

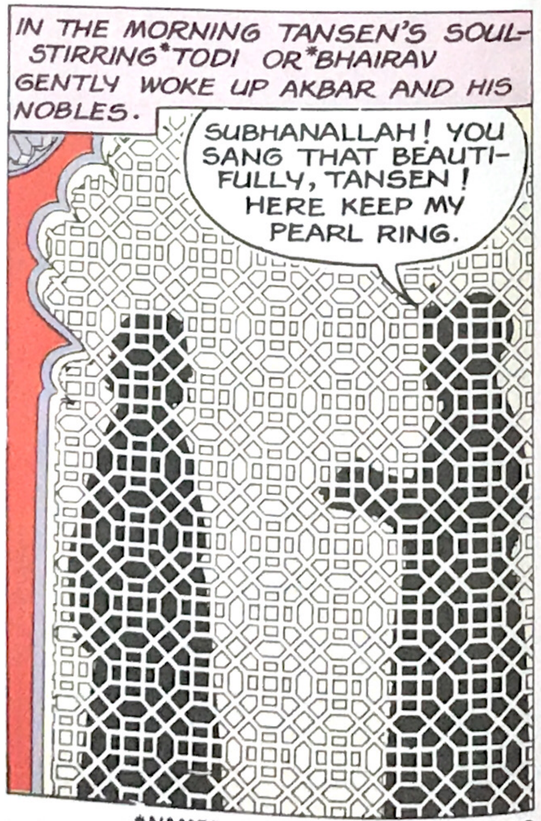
ONE DAY AT THE COURT—
TANSEN, THE MUGHAL EMPEROR AKBAR IS OUR GUEST HERE AND WE WOULD ENTERTAIN HIM WITH SOME MUSIC.
I SHALL SING SOMETHING SPECIAL, YOUR HIGHNESS.

AFTER TANSEN FINISHED SINGING—
MAGNIFICENT! MAHARAJA, YOU ARE INDEED LUCKY TO HAVE TANSEN. I WISH I HAD ONE LIKE HIM IN MY COURT.

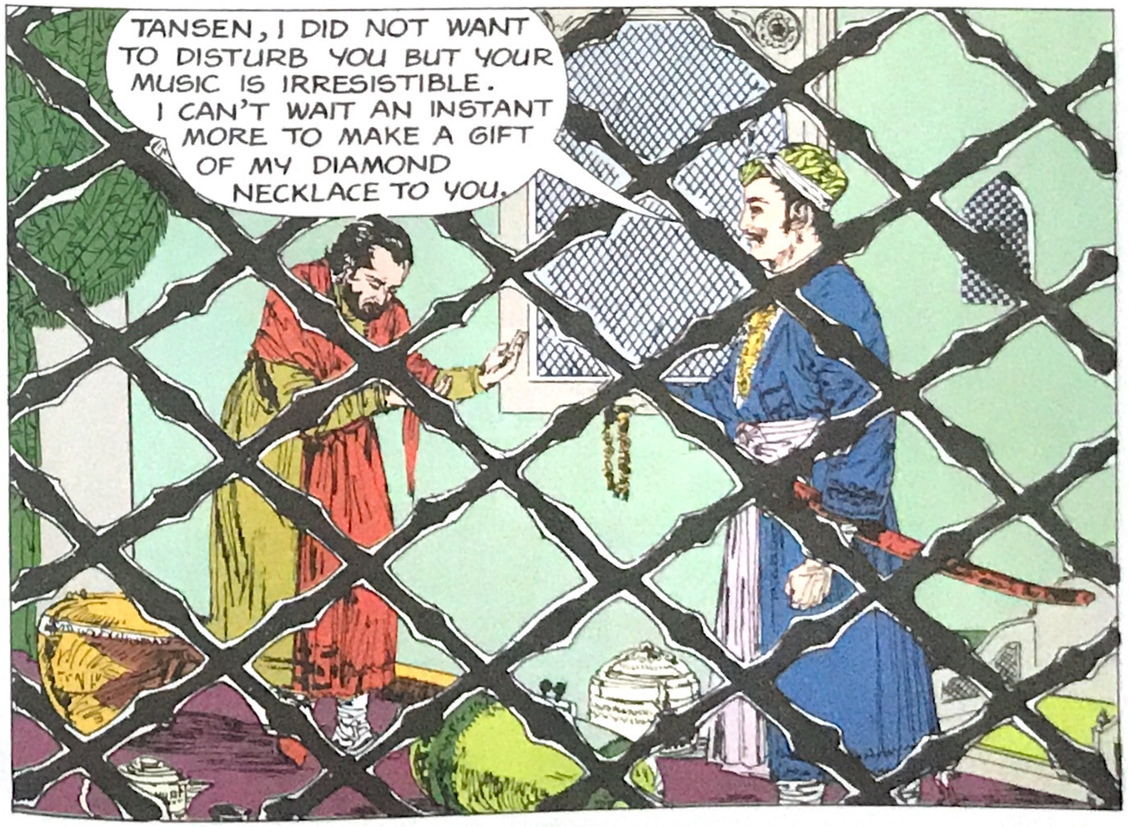
THIS IS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO PLEASE AKBAR.
GREAT EMPEROR, TANSEN SHALL ADORN YOUR COURT. I PRESENT HIM TO YOU AS A TOKEN OF OUR ETERNAL FRIENDSHIP!

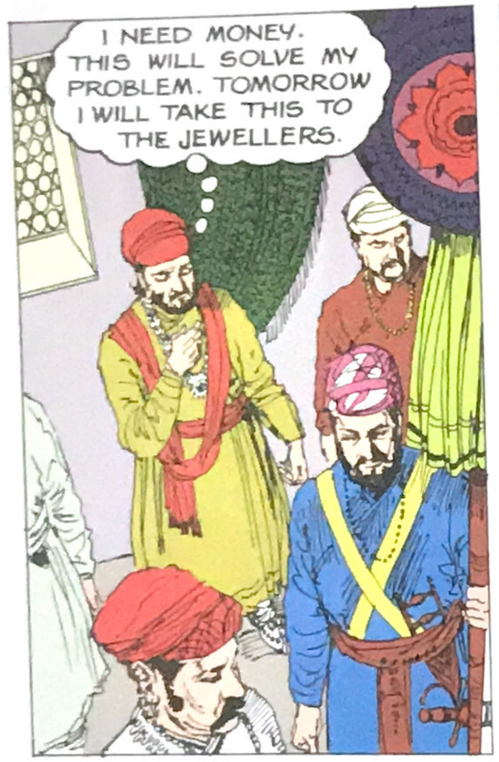




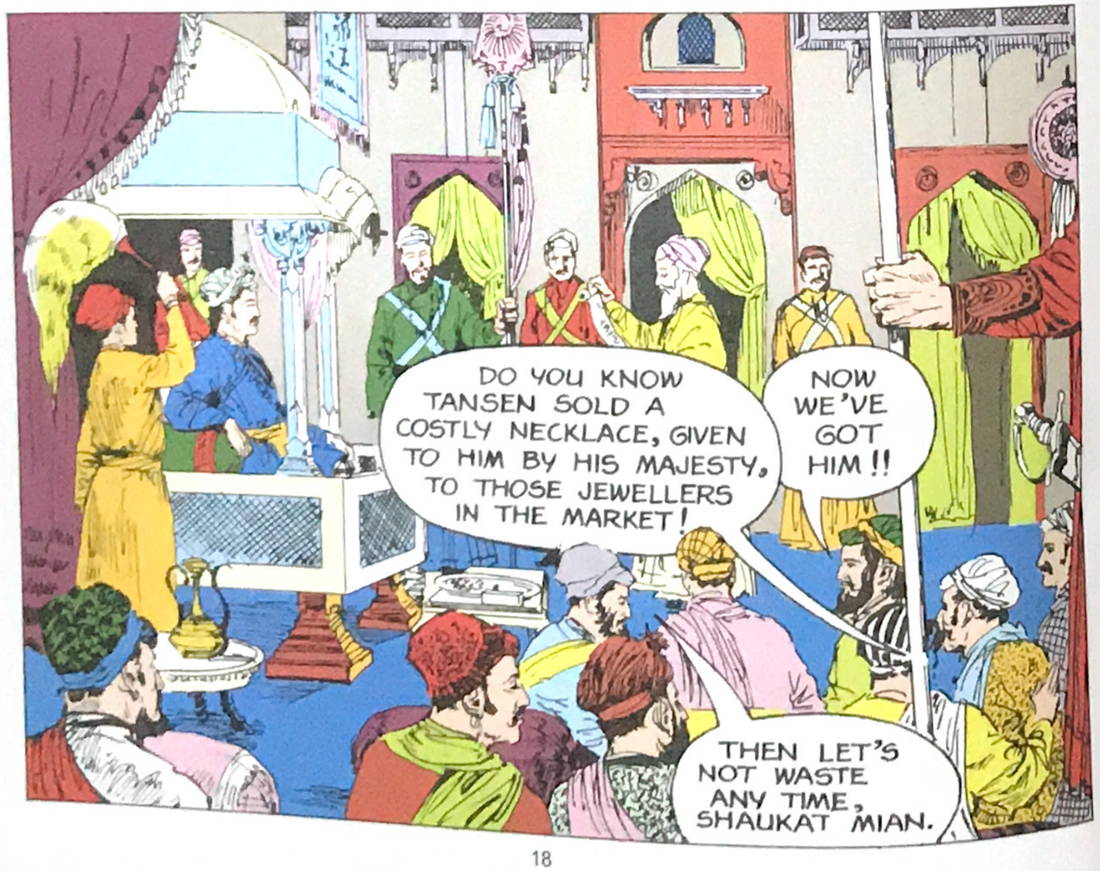


*NAMES OF INDIAN MUSICAL MODES

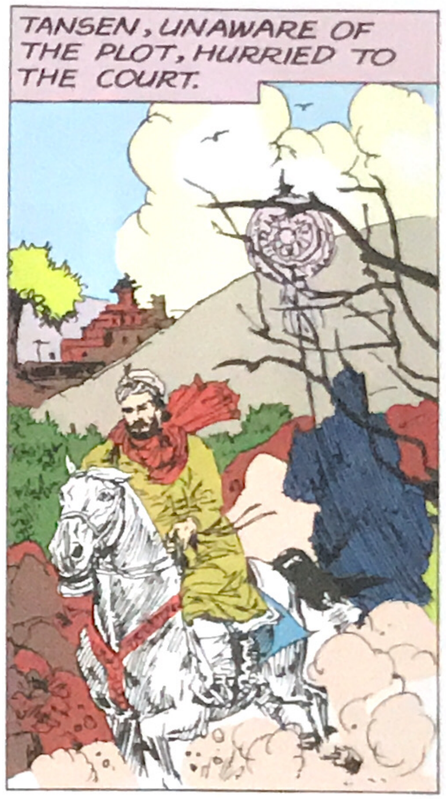



I NEED MONEY. THIS WILL SOLVE MY PROBLEM. TOMORROW I WILL TAKE THIS TO THE JEWELLERS.

SOME POWERFUL COURTIERS JEALOUS OF TANSEN, WERE AWAITING A CHANCE TO POISON AKBAR'S MIND AGAINST HIM.

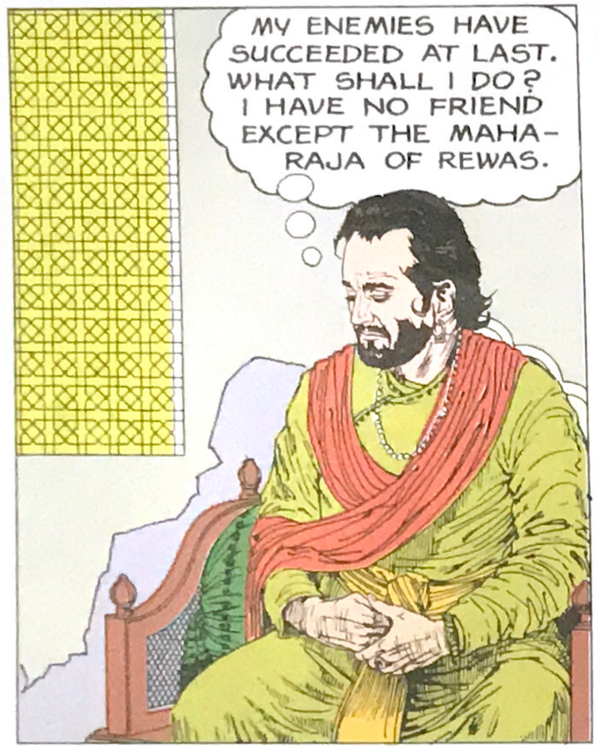

DO YOU KNOW TANSEN SOLD A COSTLY NECKLACE, GIVEN TO HIM BY HIS MAJESTY, TO THOSE JEWELLERS IN THE MARKET!
NOW WE'VE GOT HIM!!
THEN LET'S NOT WASTE ANY TIME, SHAUKAT MIAN.

LATER–
IT IS TRUE, YOUR MAJESTY. THE JEWELLER HIMSELF SAID SO.
TRADING IN ROYAL GIFTS IS AN INSULT, SIR!
SEND FOR TANSEN, IMMEDIATELY!


TANSEN, UNAWARE OF THE PLOT, HURRIED TO THE COURT.

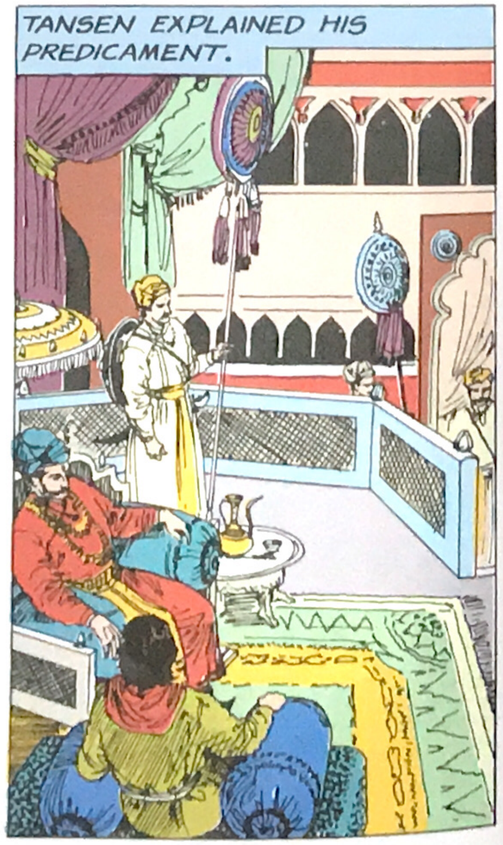
TANSEN, I SEE THAT YOU DO NOT WEAR MY DIAMOND NECKLACE!
YOUR MAJESTY, IT IS LOST!

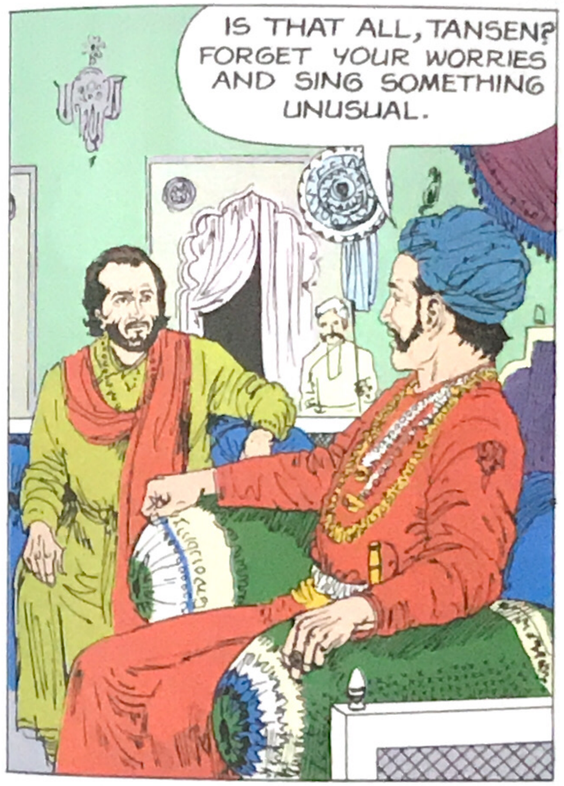
LOST? IT WAS A ROYAL GIFT. IF YOU DON'T FIND IT SOON YOU WILL BE BANISHED FROM THE COURT.


MY ENEMIES HAVE SUCCEEDED AT LAST. WHAT SHALL I DO? I HAVE NO FRIEND EXCEPT THE MAHA-RAJA OF REWAS.

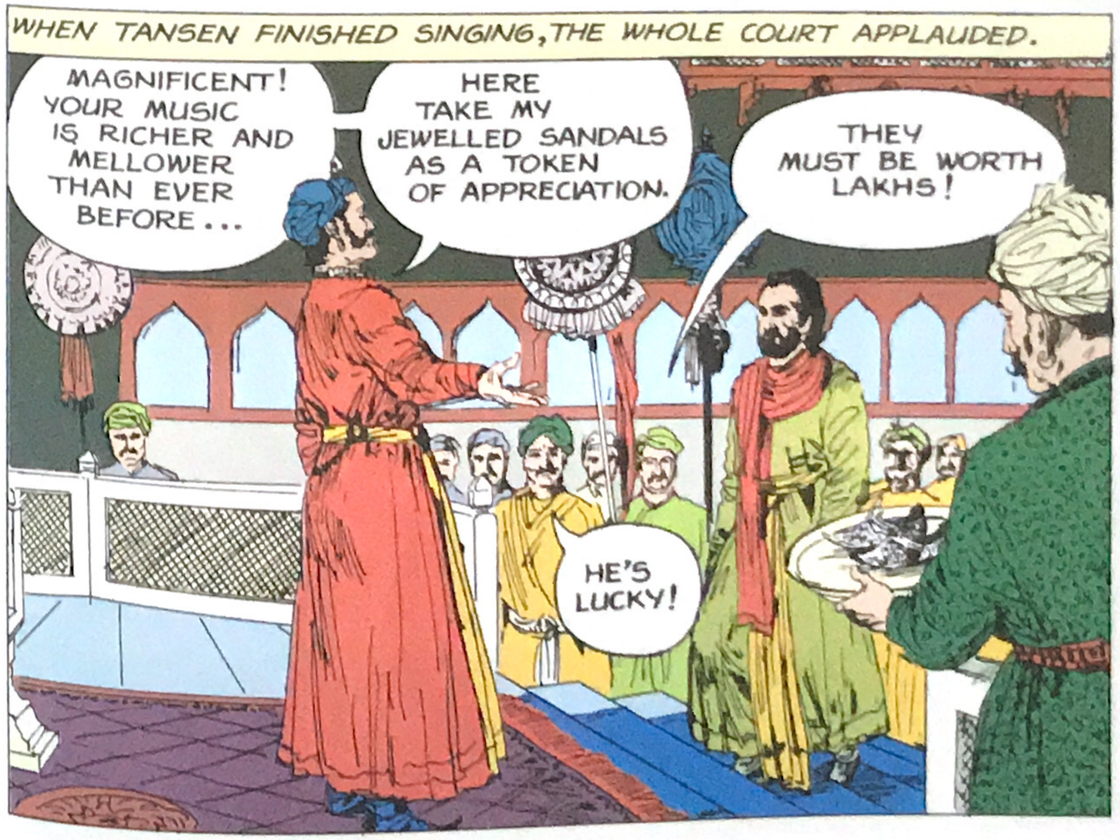
BRING MY HORSE. I AM GOING TO REWAS.

AT REWAS—
I AM EXTREMELY HAPPY TO SEE YOU, TANSEN. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
SIR, I NEED YOUR HELP.


TANSEN EXPLAINED HIS PREDICAMENT.


IS THAT ALL, TANSEN? FORGET YOUR WORRIES AND SING SOMETHING UNUSUAL.

TANSEN SANG TWO UNUSUAL RAAGS – "SUKAL BILAWAL" AND "MEGH".


WHEN TANSEN FINISHED SINGING, THE WHOLE COURT APPLAUDED.
MAGNIFICENT! YOUR MUSIC IS RICHER AND MELLOWER THAN EVER BEFORE...
HERE TAKE MY JEWELLED SANDALS AS A TOKEN OF APPRECIATION.
THEY MUST BE WORTH LAKHS!
HE'S LUCKY!

BACK IN AKBAR'S COURT, TANSEN SET DOWN THE JEWELLED SANDALS IN FRONT OF THE EMPEROR.

YOUR MAJESTY! I COULDN'T FIND YOUR NECKLACE, BUT I SHALL COMPENSATE THE LOSS WITH THIS.

SUCH PRECIOUS AND RARE GEMS! MY NECKLACE WAS NOT WORTH A QUARTER OF IT. I MADE A NEEDLESS FUSS!

I WAS UNJUST, TANSEN! THE NECKLACE WAS COSTLY, BUT THE NOTES FROM YOUR THROAT ARE *PRICELESS*!! WILL YOU FORGIVE ME?

SIRE! DON'T EMBARRASS ME.

IT WAS ALL IN VAIN.

AND THE EMPEROR'S FAVOURITE IS BACK IN HIS SEAT.

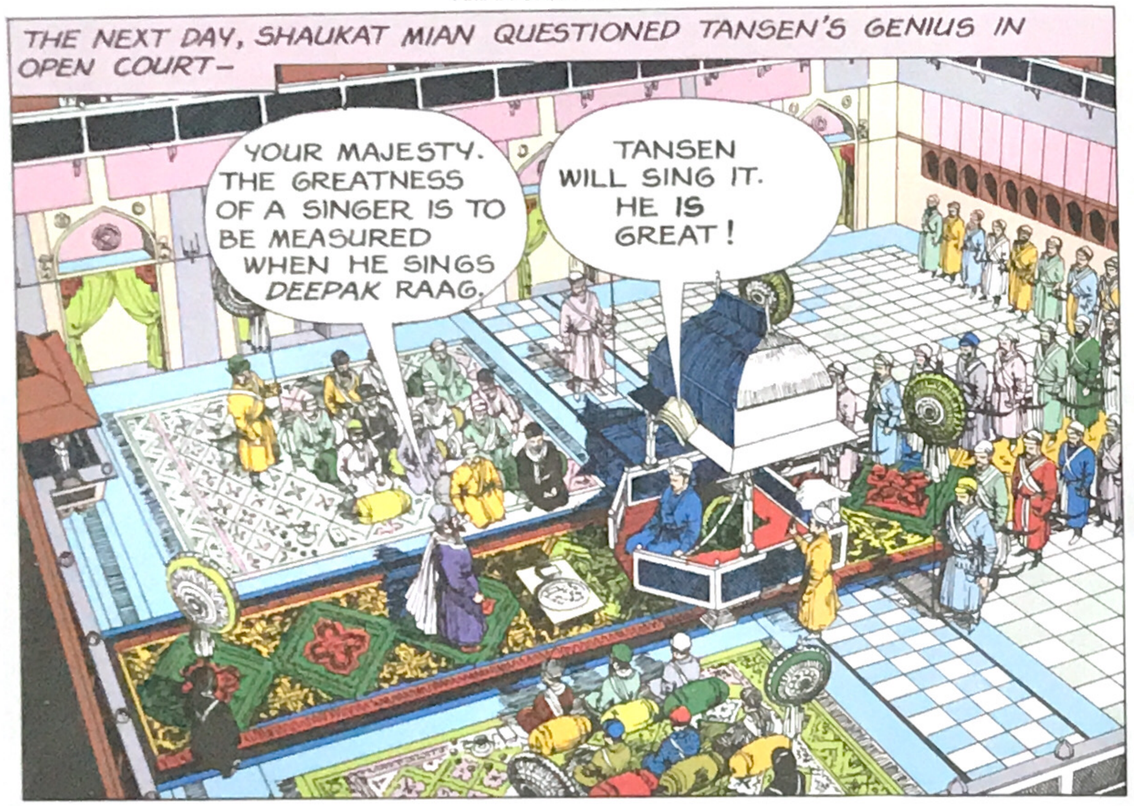
I SHALL NOT REST UNTIL TANSEN IS RUINED!!

TANSEN'S ENEMIES WERE DETERMINED TO RUIN HIM.

MAKE HIM SING *DEEPAK RAAG*. HE WILL BURN HIMSELF TO DEATH!

!!

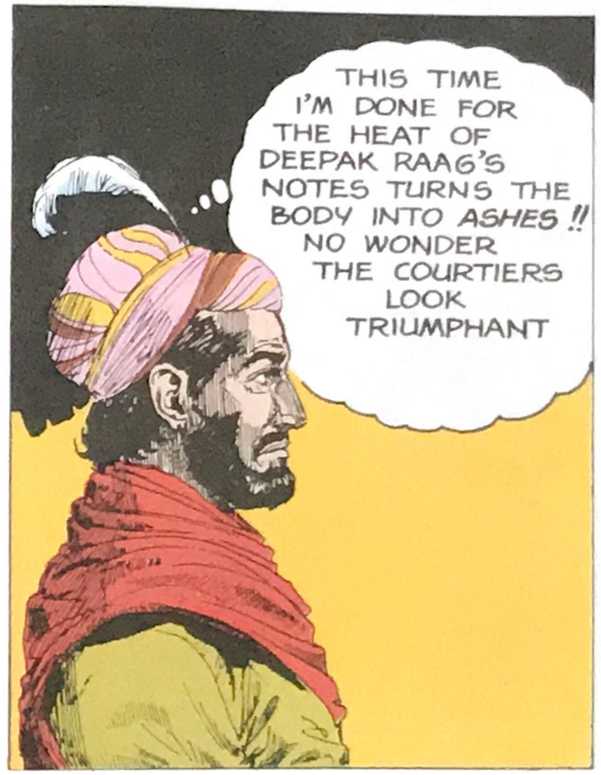
THAT'S A BRILLIANT IDEA!


THE NEXT DAY, SHAUKAT MIAN QUESTIONED TANSEN'S GENIUS IN OPEN COURT–
YOUR MAJESTY. THE GREATNESS OF A SINGER IS TO BE MEASURED WHEN HE SINGS DEEPAK RAAG.
TANSEN WILL SING IT. HE IS GREAT!

I WISH TO HEAR DEEPAK RAAG, TANSEN!
BUT YOUR MAJESTY IT WILL...
IT'S AN ORDER, TANSEN!!!

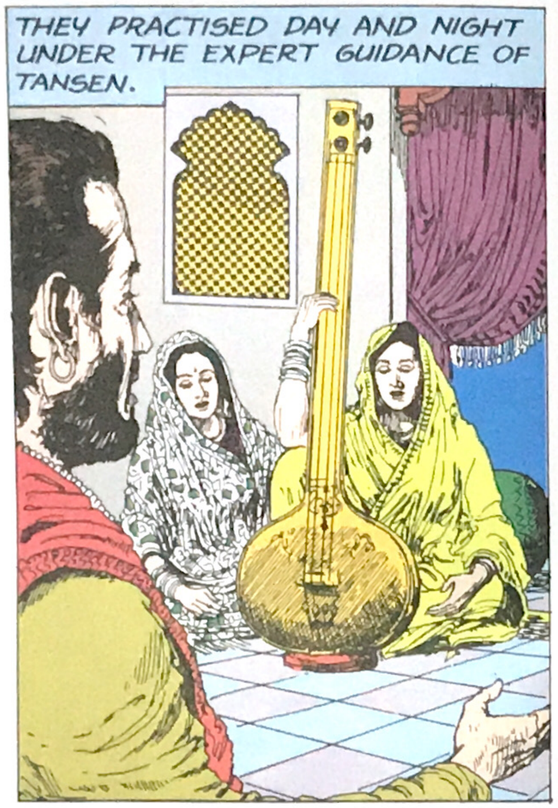
YOUR MAJESTY I WILL NEED AT LEAST TWO WEEKS FOR PREPARATION...

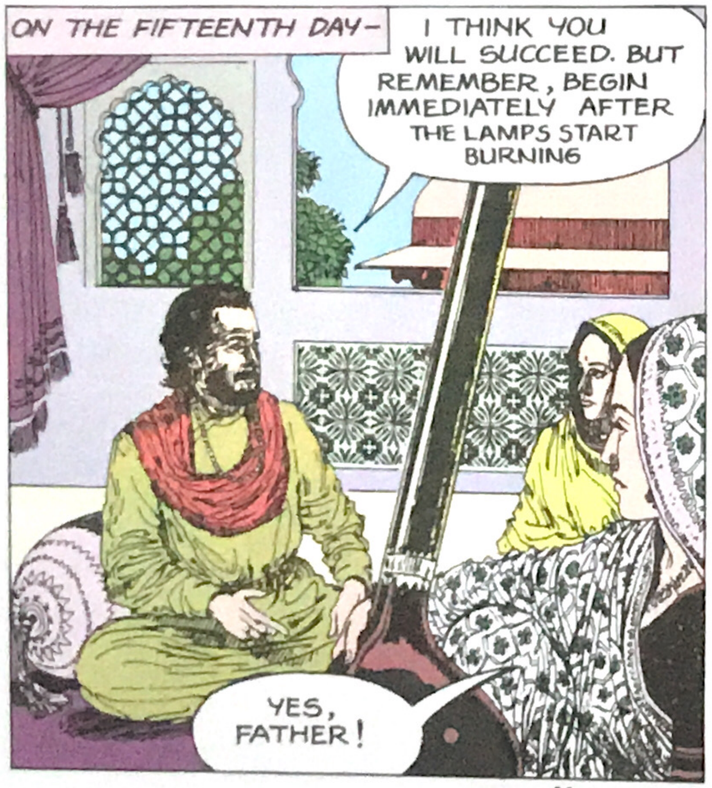
HE WON'T BE ABLE TO GET OUT OF THAT!!

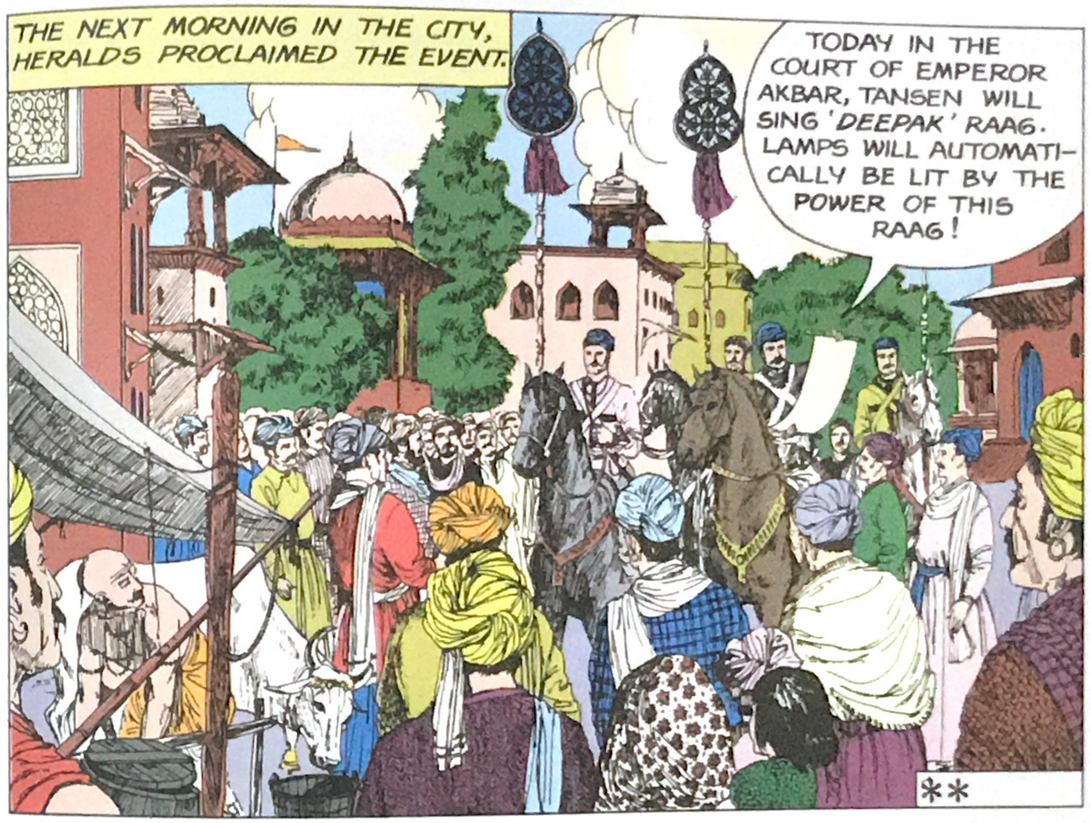

THIS TIME I'M DONE FOR THE HEAT OF DEEPAK RAAG'S NOTES TURNS THE BODY INTO ASHES!! NO WONDER THE COURTIERS LOOK TRIUMPHANT

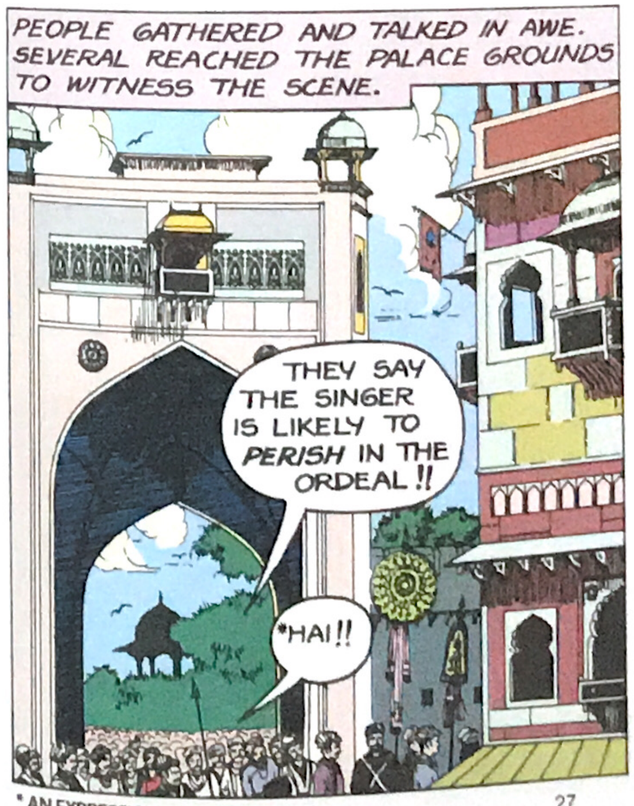
AT HOME–
MEGH RAAG BRINGS RAIN AND COOLS THE HEAT. IF SOME-ONE SINGS THIS RAAG SIMULTA-NEOUSLY I HAVE A CHANCE TO SURVIVE... BUT WHO ??

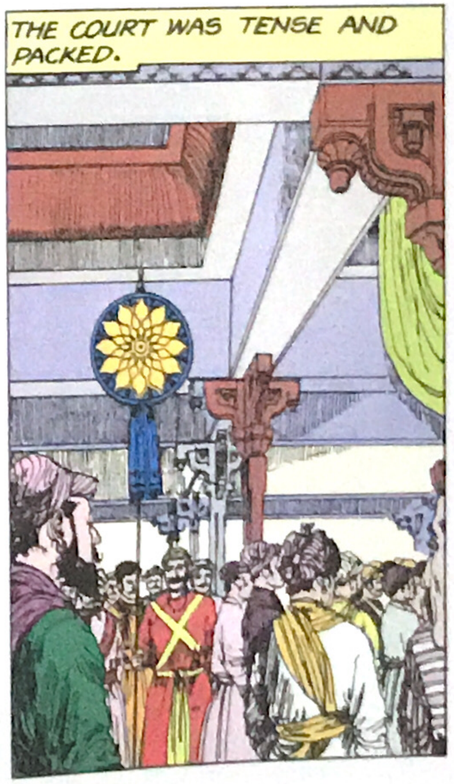
PERHAPS MY DAUGH-TER, SARASWATI AND SWAMIJI'S DISCIPLE, RUPAVATI COULD.





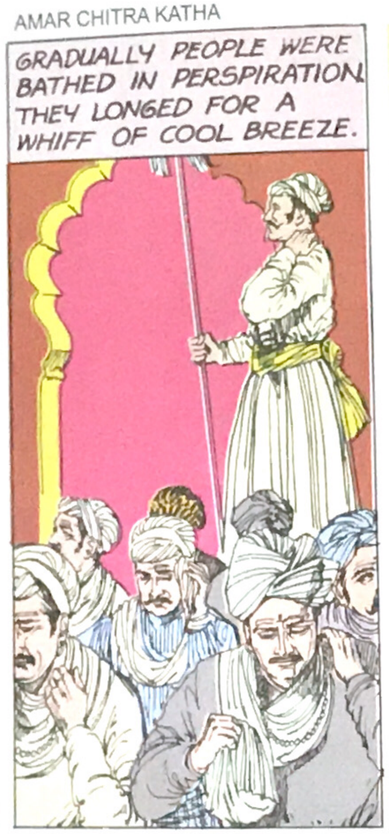




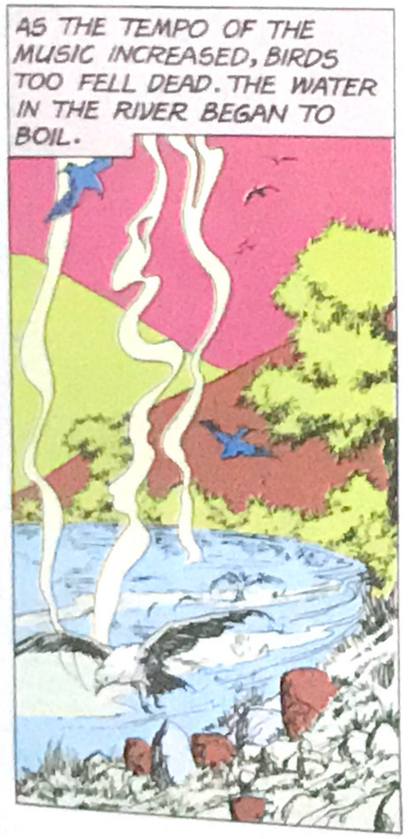


* AN EXPRESSION OF LAMENTATION

AS TANSEN BEGAN THE ALAAP* THE AIR BECAME WARM.
*SLOW UNFOLDING OF A RAAG.


GRADUALLY PEOPLE WERE BATHED IN PERSPIRATION. THEY LONGED FOR A WHIFF OF COOL BREEZE.

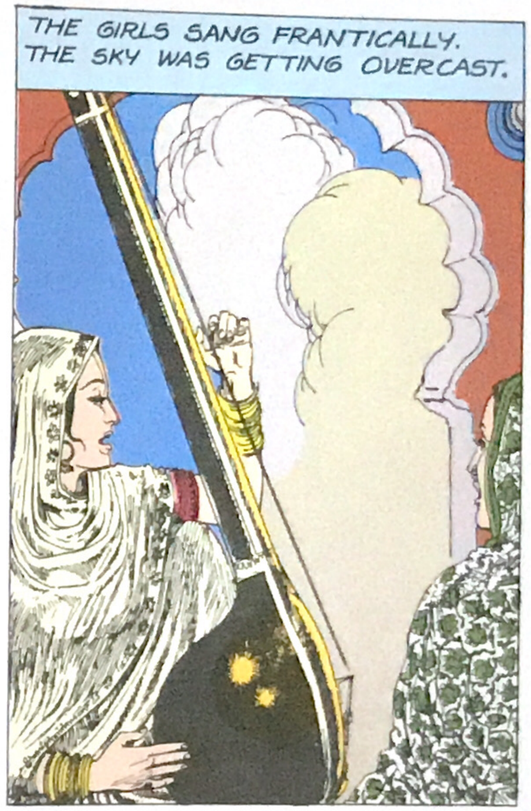
THE LEAVES OF TREES DRIED UP AND FELL TO THE GROUND.

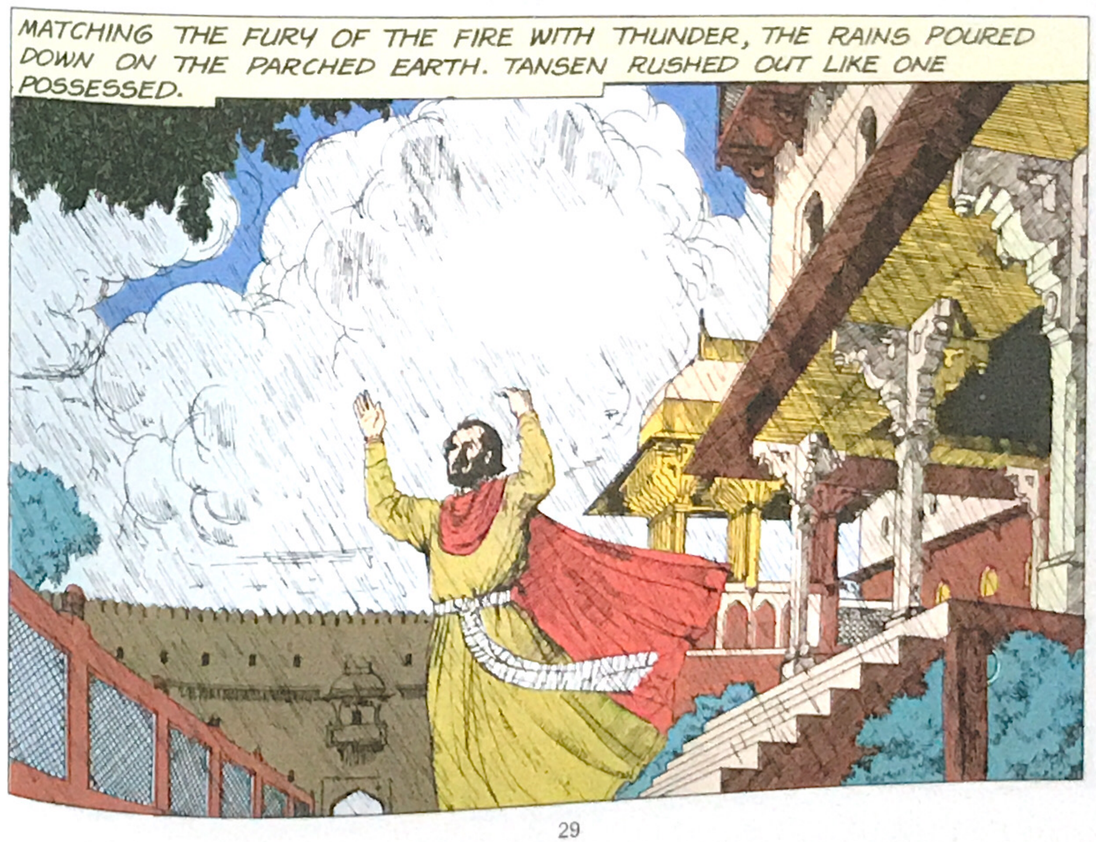

AS THE TEMPO OF THE MUSIC INCREASED, BIRDS TOO FELL DEAD. THE WATER IN THE RIVER BEGAN TO BOIL.

TANSEN'S BODY WAS FEVERISH AND HIS EYES BLOODSHOT.

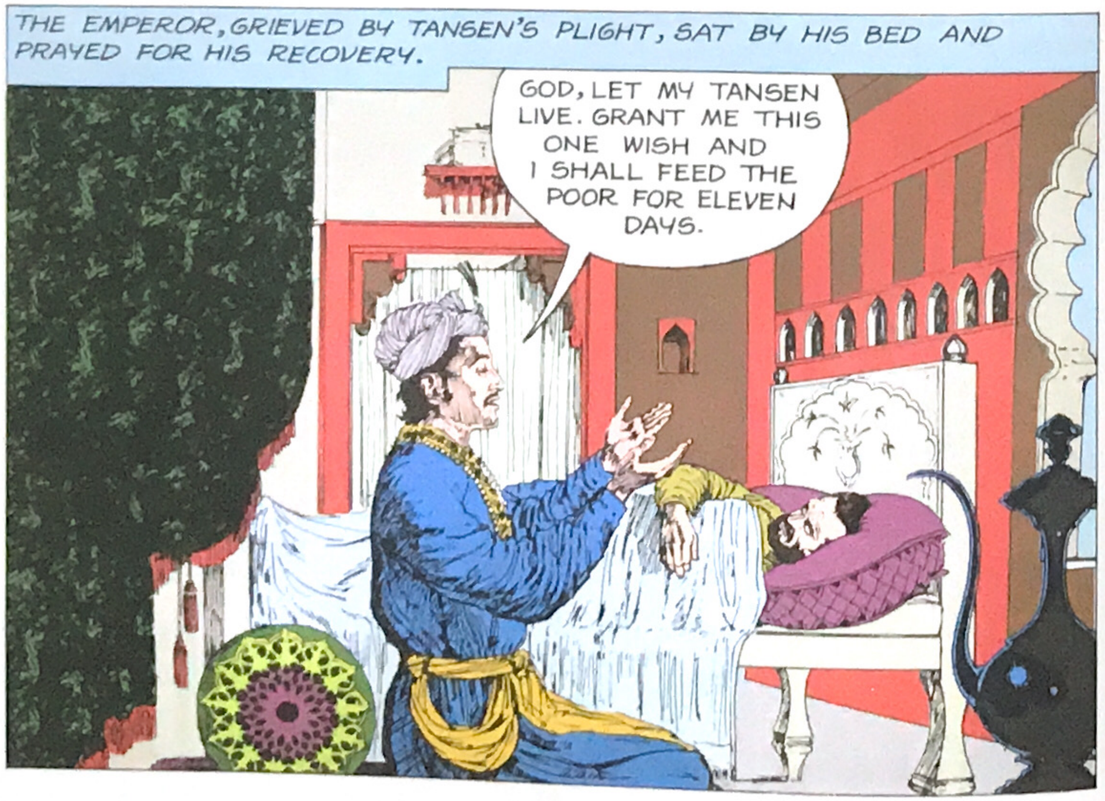
PEOPLE CRIED IN TERROR AS FLAMES SHOT UP EVERYWHERE, AND THE UNLIT LAMPS BURNED BRIGHT.

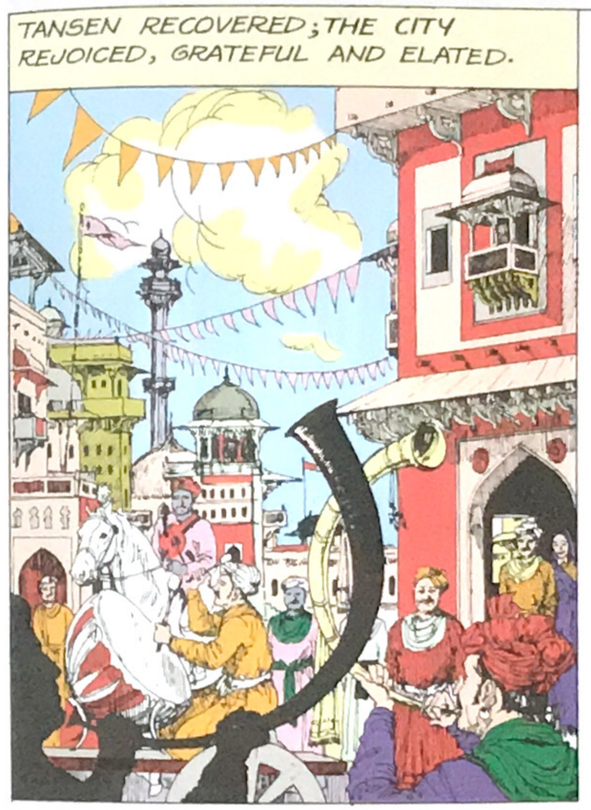
POSSESSED BY THE GENIUS OF THE RAAG, TANSEN WAS GASPING.
OH! FOR THE RAIN! WHEN WILL IT RAIN??


THE GIRLS SANG FRANTICALLY. THE SKY WAS GETTING OVERCAST.

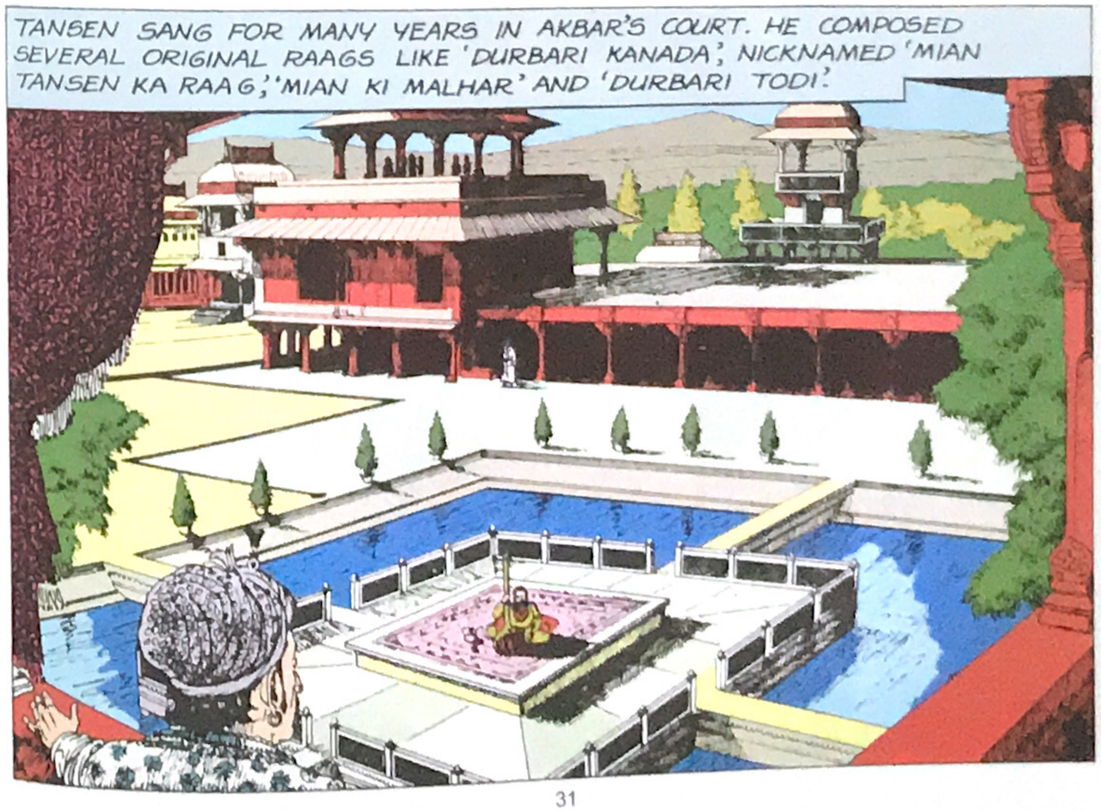

MATCHING THE FURY OF THE FIRE WITH THUNDER, THE RAINS POURED DOWN ON THE PARCHED EARTH. TANSEN RUSHED OUT LIKE ONE POSSESSED.

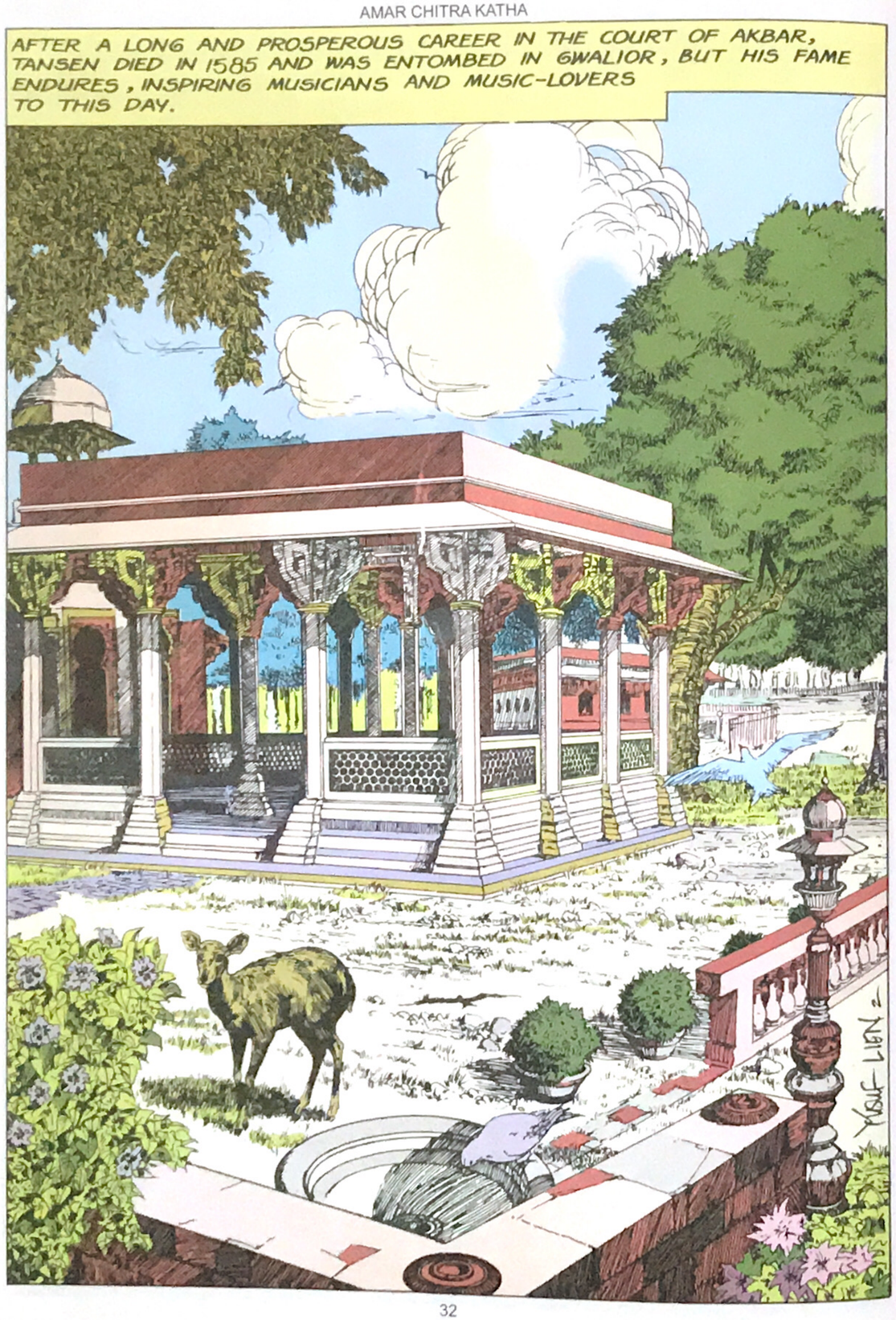
TANSEN LAY SERIOUSLY ILL FOR A MONTH.
I AM BURNING! I SEE FLAMES EVERYWHERE!! RAINS, RAINS... WHERE AM I ??


THE EMPEROR, GRIEVED BY TANSEN'S PLIGHT, SAT BY HIS BED AND PRAYED FOR HIS RECOVERY.
GOD, LET MY TANSEN LIVE. GRANT ME THIS ONE WISH AND I SHALL FEED THE POOR FOR ELEVEN DAYS.


TANSEN RECOVERED; THE CITY REJOICED, GRATEFUL AND ELATED.

THE GUILTY COURTIERS WERE PUNISHED.


TANSEN SANG FOR MANY YEARS IN AKBAR'S COURT. HE COMPOSED SEVERAL ORIGINAL RAAGS LIKE 'DURBARI KANADA', NICKNAMED 'MIAN TANSEN KA RAAG', 'MIAN KI MALHAR' AND 'DURBARI TODI'.



WHICH OF THE ACKs HAVE YOU STILL NOT READ?

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